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# Iran-US talks see 'significant progress'

## Iran indicates Hormuz may return to normal in 30 days; Trump's blockade to remain

**WASHINGTON, 24 MAY**

The US and Iran signalled that significant progress had been made in peace talks between the two sides, with Secretary of State Marco Rubio saying on Sunday evening in India that "good news" was likely "in a few hours".

Iran's semi-official Tasnim News Agency reported that memorandum stated that traffic levels through the Strait of Hormuz would return to the previous levels in 30 days after the deal was signed. The report said the naval blockade around the Strait would be fully lifted during that period, while part of Iran's frozen overseas funds would also be released in the first phase of the agreement. The Strait is crucial as nearly a fifth of the world's oil once passed through it, and India imports much of its fuel from Gulf countries.

US President Donald Trump stated on Truth Social that negotiations were "proceeding in an orderly and constructive manner" but that both sides should "take their time and get it right. There can be no mistakes."

"Our relationship with Iran is becoming a much more professional and productive one. They must understand, however, that they cannot develop or procure a nuclear weapon or bomb," he added.

President Donald Trump said the relationship with Iran was improving and negotiations were proceeding orderly —PTI

However, Trump said that the US blockade of Iranian ships traversing through the narrow Strait "will remain in full force and effect until an agreement is reached, certified and signed."

- Trump said the deal was 'largerly negotiated' and Rubio said good news was likely in a few hours. However, it remains unclear if sticking points like Iran's uranium have been sorted

After Trump's post, a senior Iranian military commander said outsiders will have no place in the Strait.

"We warn the enemies that Supreme Leader Mojtaba Khamenei's plans and strategies for managing the Persian Gulf and the Strait of Hormuz will guarantee the future of the region and a new regional and international order within the framework of the strategy of a strong Iran, in which foreigners will have no place," said Major General Ali Abdollahi, commander of Iran's Khatam al-Anbiya Central Headquarters, which is associated with the IRGC.

Earlier, Rubio had said that "Significant progress, although not final progress has been made". —*Agencies*

>>>*More on Pages 6, 7*

## 'Beneficial, sustainable' India & US trade deal imminent: Rubio

**NEW DELHI, 24 MAY**

India and the US are poised to soon firm up a mutually "beneficial" and "sustainable" US Secretary of State Marco Rubio said after a meeting with External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Sunday.

Rubio, currently on a four-day visit to India, said that the much-awaited trade deal will serve the mutual interests of both countries, and signalled ties between Washington and New Delhi, which plummeted after the Trump administration imposed 50 per cent tariffs, was set to witness an upward trajectory.

"We are hopeful that our Trade Representative can visit here very soon. We had an Indian delegation in the US. We've made tremendous progress," he said at the joint press briefing with Jaishankar.

Jaishankar stressed the value of concluding the interim agreement at an early date, adding that it would be an important step towards a comprehensive bilateral trade agreement.

EAM S Jaishankar with US Secretary of State Marco Rubio, in New Delhi, Sunday —PTI

Rubio argued that Trump's tariffs were based on Washington's self-interest, and not aimed at creating friction with India. He claimed that the US was getting trade deals that are mutually beneficial and would address Washington's trade imbalances.

> **I will take that very seriously about the comments. I'm sure that there are people who have made comments online and in other places because every country in the world has stupid people. I am sure there are stupid people here; there are stupid people in the United States who make dumb comments all the time,**
>
> —Marco Rubio, US Secretary of State on racism against Indians in US

"And one of those we hope will be India. We are on the verge of making that happen," he said. The India-US relationship "continues to be strong and in fact, I believe by the end of this administration, it will be stronger than it has ever been". On US' ties with Pakistan and China, he said that it didn't come at Delhi's expense. —*PTI*

>>>*More on Page 3*

## Classes 11 &12 to get midday meals in Telangana

**HYDERABAD, 24 MAY**

Telangana's Cabinet approved a mid-day meal scheme for students in all junior colleges (11th and 12th standard). The government also sanctioned 2.50 lakh houses in the second phase of the 'Indiramma' housing scheme, with 4.50 lakh houses approved earlier at a cost of Rs 22,500 crore. The Cabinet also launched the Next-Generation Life Sciences Policy 2026-30, aiming to attract USD 25 billion investment and create five lakh jobs, transforming Telangana into a top-five global life sciences hub by 2030. Additionally, Rs 587 crore was approved for the Palamuru-Ranga Reddy Lift Irrigation Scheme. —*PTI*

## 6 lakh trees to be cut for coal project in MP: Ramesh

**NEW DELHI, 23 MAY**

Jairam Ramesh said legal options remain open to challenge the environmental clearance for a coal mining project in Singrauli, Madhya Pradesh. He highlighted that about 6 lakh trees would be cut in dense forests, which were classified as a "No-Go" zone in 2011 due to forest richness and elephant corridors. Ramesh noted, "In May 2025, the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change approved the proposal of the Modani Empire for mining." The approval was challenged in the NGT, which dismissed the plea in April 2026 due to delay. The case is now open for further legal review. —*PTI*

## Prez Murmu to confer 66 Padma awards on Monday

**NEW DELHI, 24 MAY**

President Droupadi Murmu will present 66 Padma awards at the first civil investiture ceremony for 2026 at Ganatantra Mandap of the Rashtrapati Bhavan on Monday. She will confer two Padma Vibhushan, six Padma Bhushan and 58 Padma Shri awards. She has approved conferment of 131 Padma awards including five Padma Vibhushan, 13 Padma Bhushan and 113 Padma Shri awards. The remaining Padma awardees will be conferred in the second round of the ceremony to be held later. The awards are announced on the occasion of the Republic Day. This year's awards include a wide spectrum of 45 unsung heroes from across the length and breadth of India. —*PTI*

## Cong: Govt lashed out at CJP as IB warned of unrest

**MUMBAI, 24 MAY**

Maharashtra Congress leaders on Saturday accused the BJP-led Centre of suppressing dissent after social media accounts of the satirical Cockroach Janta Party (CJP) were allegedly blocked. Former state Congress chiefs Nana Patole and Balasaheb Thorat claimed the action followed an Intelligence Bureau report warning that the issue could trigger public unrest. Patole alleged the government was trying to suppress public anger instead of addressing issues. He said BJP could not avoid online criticism. CJP launched a campaign demanding the resignation of Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan over the NEET paper leak. CJP founder Abhijeet Dipke said its accounts and website were compromised. —*PTI*

## BJP wins WB's Falta assembly seat by over 1.09 lakh votes

**KOLKATA, 24 MAY**

BJP candidate Debangshu Panda won the Falta assembly seat on Sunday by a 1.09 lakh votes, breaching the stronghold of the Trinamool Congress, whose nominee Jahangir Khan slipped to fourth position.

Just days before the repoll, Khan announced that he would not be in the contest, a decision the TMC described as his personal. However, since withdrawn of nomination was not possible at that time, his name remained on the EVMs.

Panda secured 1,49,666 votes while CPI(M)'s Sambhu Nath Kurmi came second with 40,645 votes cast in his favour. Congress candidate Abdur Razzak Molla stood third with 10,084 votes. Khan got 7,783 votes in the 2.36 lakh-strong constituency.

In a post on X, the Chief Minister said he bowed "in salutation to the people of Falta" for giving a "resounding mandate" to BJP candidate Debangshu Panda and noted that he had appealed for a victory margin of one lakh votes, a target that had been crossed.

Promising to repay the "debt through development" and build a "golden Falta", he launched a sharp attack on the Trinamool Congress accusing it of abusing state machinery, looting public funds and fostering a culture of syndicates and intimidation during rule in the state.

BJP's Debangshu Panda won —PTI

Adhikari also referred to a "fraudster who parachuted in and claimed the title of commander", alleging that democracy had been throttled and asserting that the previous election had been turned into a "farce". —*PTI*

>>>*More on Page 3*

## Don't go to 3 African countries: Govt on Ebola

**NEW DELHI, 24 MAY**

India on Saturday advised citizens to avoid non-essential travel to the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Uganda and South Sudan following the Ebola outbreak caused by the Bundibugyo strain in parts of Africa. The advisory came after the World Health Organisation declared the outbreak a Public Health Emergency of International Concern on 17 May.

The government said countries bordering Congo and Uganda, including South Sudan, faced a high risk of transmission. Indian citizens residing in or travelling to the affected countries were urged to follow local health guidelines, maintain hygiene precautions, avoid contact with symptomatic persons and seek medical attention if fever or related symptoms develop.

The advisory noted that no approved vaccines or specific treatments exist for Ebola caused by the Bundibugyo strain. India has not reported any linked case so far and is closely monitoring the evolving situation.

>>>**More on Page 6**

## 10 of family drown while collecting mussels in K'taka

**KARWAR, 24 MAY**

At least 10 members of a family, including seven women, drowned while two others were reported missing after a group attempting to collect freshwater mussels (locally called malvi) was swept away by strong currents in the Tatte Hakkalu river in Uttara Kannada district, police said on Sunday.

Uttara Kannada district Superintendent of Police (SP) Deepan MN told Salar News, "The incident occurred at around 11.30am to 12pm, at the river in Shirali village of Bhatkal taluk, when 14 people had gone fishing during heavy rainfall. The river water level suddenly increased and a strong gush of water swept them away".

People gather at the site of the incident on Tatte Hakkalu river, at Karwar in Uttara Kannada district —PTI

The deceased included Umesh Manjunath Naik, 40; Laxmi Mahadev Naik, 42; Laxmi Jattappa Naik, 30; Laxmi Appanna Naik, 60; Laxmi Shivaram Naik, 49; Jyoti Mastamma Naik, 34; Malati Naik, 38; and Mastamma Naik, 60. Several others were still missing.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi announcing an ex-gratia of Rs 2 lakh from the PMNRF would be given to the next of kin of each of the deceased. The injured would be given Rs 50,000. CM Siddaramaiah also announced a solatium of Rs 5 lakh to the next to the kin of each victim. –*Salar News*

>>>*More on Page 2*

## WB to set up 'holding centres' for 'illegal immigrants'

**KOLKATA, 24 MAY**

The West Bengal government has directed all district administrations to set up "holding centres" for suspected illegal foreigners and foreign prisoners awaiting deportation, amid its intensified anti-infiltration drive. The order, issued by the Home and Hill Affairs Department on May 23, asked districts to create infrastructure to house apprehended foreigners until repatriation formalities are completed.

The move follows Chief Minister Suvendu Adhikari's announcement of a "detect, delete and deport" policy targeting illegal immigrants. Officials said the centres would temporarily house suspected illegal entrants and foreign nationals awaiting deportation. Under central guidelines, detainees can be held for up to 30 days while their nationality and documents are verified.

The framework also includes biometric collection and coordination with border authorities. Adhikari recently said illegal entrants not covered under the Citizenship (Amendment) Act would be arrested and handed over to the BSF for deportation through coordination with Bangladesh authorities. —*PTI*

**BATS AND BIRDS DROP DEAD**

## *Animals struggle in India's heatwave*

**NEW DELHI, 24 MAY**

Street animals are struggling in the prevailing heatwave conditions across the country, reports say.

Nearly 200 bats have been found dead at a village in Chhattisgarh's Korba district, with officials suspecting heatwave conditions as the cause. The Korba region of central Chhattisgarh recorded temperatures between 42 and 44 degrees Celsius on Saturday.

Meanwhile in New Delhi, veterinarians and animal rescuers say there has been a 50 per cent rise in heat-related illnesses like dehydration among birds, who are falling unconscious. Street animals like dogs, cats, horses and cows are suffering from heat strokes, and stomach toxicity due to eating rotting garbage.

In Uttar Pradesh's Sambhal, there has been a surge in dog and monkey bite cases, with officials attributing it to heightened aggression due to the heat. Residents have also raised concerns over the increasing presence of stray dogs and monkeys in public areas.

The Bhagwan Birsa Biological Park in Ranchi has introduced coolers, bathing tubs and fruits for its animals to find relief in the heatwave.

The Nawab Wajid Ali Shah Zoological Garden in Lucknow and the Dehradun Zoo have both converted enclosures into managed cooling zones with sprinklers. —*Agencies*

>>>*More on Pages 4, 5*

### 51 dead in Telangana heatwave: Report

**HYDERABAD:** At least 51 people died of heatstroke across Telangana on Saturday, according to a report by Eenadu. Temperatures crossed 46 degrees Celsius in several districts there. The news takes the toll over three days to more than 100. Meanwhile, officials have warned of record-level heatwave conditions for the next three days in Andhra Pradesh as well. Northern Andhra, however, could receive rainfall.

## NIA CLAIMS US GO-PRO REACHED PAHALGAM TERRORISTS FROM CHINA

**PAHALGAM, 24 MAY**

The NIA has filed a chargesheet for Pahalgam terror attack, while investigators are tracing a global supply chain to determine how a US-manufactured GoPro camera, shipped to China, ended up with Lashkar-e-Taiba terrorists.

The device was recovered from terrorists killed in Dachigam last July.

Officials said the device was initially shipped to an authorised Chinese distributor. India lacks a Mutual Legal Assistance Treaty with China, so cases are handled diplomatically. The probe aims to identify procurement channels and possible diversion from Chinese sources, with Pakistani military involvement suspected.

The attack in Baisaran on 22 April, 2025, killed 26, with terrorists using Chinese weapons. The three terrorists, Faisal Jatt, Habeeb Tahir, and Hamza Afghani, escaped through Pahalgam jungles. The NIA also charged six individuals linked to the attack, including the terrorists and local helpers. —*PTI*

# Cong betrayed people of K'taka: BJP President

## 2028 election tops Nitin Nabin's maiden K'taka visit agenda

**BENGALURU, 24 MAY**

After chairing a Karnataka BJP core committee meeting, BJP National President Nitin Nabin on Sunday claimed the Congress government had "betrayed" the people of the State.

Nabin's maiden visit to the State comes amid speculation about a rejig in the BJP leadership in the State, with Karnataka BJP President BY Vijayendra's term at the top post set to expire in November and the party looking to gain momentum well ahead of the 2028 elections.

However, Nabin, on a two-day visit to Karnataka, alleged that the Congress was plagued by internal conflicts and accused its leaders of "using power for personal interests" rather than governance. He alleged that the Congress had diverted its focus away from development and welfare activities over the past three years.

"Because of their internal conflicts, public welfare works have taken a back seat," he said, a reference to the alleged power tussle between Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and his Deputy DK Shivakumar. "The government here has nothing to do with the interests of the people. The leaders running this government are using the government and power merely as instruments for themselves."

Nabin accused the Congress of "financially exploiting" Karnataka for the benefit of its national leadership. "Congress is using Karnataka as an ATM to decorate and sustain its court in Delhi."

Sources said that during the State-level core committee meeting, Nabin gave instructions to gear up for the local body elections – such as the upcoming GBA polls - and strengthen the party base at the grassroot level for the 2028 assembly election.

However, he said he is looking forward to participate in the training camps to be held in the State and "observe how the party's active organisational activities are continuously moving forward in Karnataka."

Notably, when Vijayendra, a first term MLA, was made President, the BJP suffered from continuous infighting and factionalism. —*PTI*

BJP President Nitin Nabin with BS Yeddiyurappa, State BJP President BY Vijayendra, Opposition leader R Ashoka in Bengaluru on Sunday —*SALAR*

- This comes amid buzz of a rejig in state BJP leadership, with BJP head BY Vijayendra's term at the top post set to expire in November

Locals gather after 10 people drowned in Uttara Kannada on Sunday —salar

# Rescue attempts push drowning death toll higher

**KARWAR, 24 MAY**

When strong currents in the Tatte Hakkalu river in Uttara Kannada district swept away a family, several jumped into the river to rescue those struggling in the water, leading to more people being caught in the strong current.

Police sources said ten bodies had been recovered so far, with at least three still missing.

The two people who were rescued are Nagaratna and Mahadevi, who have been admitted to the hospital. Yet, rescue personnel, police teams and local residents were continuing intensive search operations in the river. The deceased, mostly women and all from the same family, were natives of Shirali in Bhatkal taluk and were collecting mussels despite heavy rain.

Collecting freshwater mussels is a livelihood activity for some sections of people, similar to fishing. Many of those involved were experienced in the work and had reportedly undertaken such activities earlier as well. However, Bhatkal Tahsildar Nagendra Kolshetti, told Salar News that restrictions were already in place in several villages to prevent people from entering dangerous rivers and water bodies.

"Every year, from 1 June, the government imposes fishing activity restrictions related to and conducts awareness programs," Kolshetti said. "Despite these precautionary measures, the tragic incident still occur." —*Salar News*

# SIR could take away govt benefits: DKS

**BENGALURU, 24 MAY**

Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar voiced strong opposition to upcoming the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls, alleging that poor voters across the country were at risk of losing their voting rights.

"Once they lose their voting rights, how will they be recognised in any way? Tomorrow it could affect pensions, the five guarantee schemes, housing, sites, land — they could lose everything," he said while speaking to reporters in the City on Sunday.

Warning against linking welfare benefits with electoral exclusion, he added, "Tomorrow morning, if all those schemes disappear - rice through ration cards, Gruha Lakshmi money, Gruha Jyothi benefits - what will they say? The moment they are told they have no vote, their benefits will also be taken away."

"Because of SIR, a lot of harm is happening in this country," the KPCC President added.

"Poor people still do not fully understand this process. In some states, they are removing 50 lakh, 60 lakh, even 90 lakh names like this."

Shivakumar noted that migrant workers and elderly voters were especially vulnerable to exclusion. "Poor old people, what would they know? They may be working somewhere else. Nowadays people have migrated everywhere, to Goa, Mumbai, Bengaluru and other places".

He said governments must help citizens obtain the required documents and ensure no eligible voter was excluded, and added that political parties were mobilising booth-level workers to spread awareness and help voters retain their franchise. —*PTI*

Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar alleged that poor voters were at risk of losing out due to SIR —*SALAR*

### People excluded from SIR in Bihar, Bengal, stripped of social benefits

Bihar Chief Minister Samrat Choudhary recently said that people whose names were deleted during the SIR process won't be eligible for government benefits, including rations and welfare schemes and that their bank passbooks would canceled in due course. The new BJP government in West Bengal has issued a similar order.

**I don't know why Congress is bothered about the SIR. I don't understand why there is apprehension for Congress with those bogus voters. We have seen the result of West Bengal. All the bogus voters have been deleted**

—Jagadish Shettar, BJP MP and former CM

## BAKRID READY

Goats and Sheep from various districts are brought for sale at Chamrajpet Idgah Maidan ahead of Bakrid festival in Bengaluru on Sunday —*MOHAMMED ASAD*

# Leopard that killed a boy in MM Hills captured after 15-day operation

**MYSURU, 24 MAY**

A leopard that had attacked and killed a 10-year-old boy from Bengaluru near MM Hills in Chamarajanagar district has been captured by Forest Department officials after 15 days of operations.

The leopard was ensnared in a in a cage placed by officials near the Indiganath in the wee hours of Sunday.

The movement of the leopard was captured in thermal drones and other cameras installed in strategic locations. The Department had also placed cages at several strategic locations and deployed additional staff.

The wild cat also killed several goats, other livestock at Indiganatha village, located along the Nagamale stretch. The incident has triggered protests in the area.

The deceased boy, Harshith, a resident of Laggare in Bengaluru was killed fifteen days ago when he, along with his parents and a group of ten devotees were undertaking a padayatra to Nagamale after collecting a ticket from the Forest Department. The leopard attacked the boy and dragged him deep into the jungle, despite the best efforts of his parents and others to save him.

They were staying at the MM Hills Guest House after receiving Darshan at the Male Mahadeshwara temple.

The capture of the leopard brought relief to residents, even as Forest Department officials said that they would verify if the same cat was responsible for Harshit's death after taking it to a rehabilitation centre.

Following Harshit's death, the Forest Department had banned trekking to Nagamale, —*Salar News*

Leopard from Chamarajanagar district —*SALAR*

### Mysuru: 137 trees to be axed to expand BEML campus

**MYSURU, 24 MAY**

At least 137 tress are set to be cut to build an Occupational Health Centre (OHC) at BEML campus in Koorgalli, Mysuru taluk.

The trees earmarked for removal include 47 teak trees, 13 acacia trees, 10 mahogany trees and 50 wild tree species. In addition, nine Peltophorum trees, six silver trees and one tree each of orchid and Indian Beech (Honge) species have also been listed.

The Forest Department has invited public objections until 25 May, and environmentalists have visited the site to see if 20 trees could be saved.

Spread across 450 acres with 50% green cover, the BEML campus needs a new OHC as the existing facility cannot serve its nearly 2,000 employees, officials said. —*Agencies*

## 'SAVE SANKEY TANK'

Residents of Sadashivanagar and environmental activists take part in their awareness campaign titled 'Save Sankey Tank' to save the lake, in Bengaluru on Saturday. They say rampant construction and sewage inflow are visibly damaging City's key water body. They also demanded an independent water quality audit —*MOHAMMED ASAD*

### DMK urges Vijay to 'thwart' DKS over Mekedatu dam

**CHENNAI, 24 MAY**

Tamil Nadu's DMK on Sunday lashed out at Karnataka DyCM DK Shivakumar over the Mekedatu dam, alleging he displayed "arrogant attitude" by claiming Tamil Nadu had no right to raise objection over the project on river Cauvery.

Senior DMK leader KN Nehru demanded that Tamil Nadu CM "(Vijay) should thwart efforts to construct the dam in the initial phase itself."

The DMK Principal Secretary added that Shivakumar made the remarks thinking that there would be no opposition in Tamil Nadu, given that the Congress is now part of the ruling coalition government with the TVK.

"Our leader (MK Stalin) will not hesitate to make any sacrifice to ensure Tamil Nadu's right in Cauvery River," Nehru added, claiming that as per the Supreme Court order, no construction activity could be done at Mekedatu without the prior permission of the lower riparian states.

Karnataka plans to construct a balancing reservoir on Cauvery in that state to meet the twin objectives of drinking water requirements and power generation, with Shivakumar saying that a Detailed Project Report was ready and would be submitted. —*PTI*

# Investors received excess returns from Shivam Associates says CID

**BELAGAVI, 24 MAY**

The CID investigatin into Shivam Associates has now turned its attention to investors who received returns exceeding their original investments.

Some who invested Rs 50 lakh reportedly received up to Rs 1 crore in return, and the agency has begun identifying such beneficiaries with a view to recovering the excess amounts, which will then be redistributed to investors who suffered losses.

Around 35,000 people had invested funds in Shivam Associates, a firm owned by Shivananada Neelannavar, which is currently under investigation by the CID for allegedly collecting nearly Rs 4,500 crore from the public by promising high returns.

Preliminary findings indicate that several investors earned returns amounting to nearly double their invested sums. In some cases, individuals who invested Rs 50 lakh reportedly received up to Rs 1 crore in return.

Former Army personnel and retired employees were among the major investors in the associates, lured by promises of returns of up to 35 per cent annually. Several early investors reportedly received the assured returns, prompting them to reinvest their entire earnings. —*Salar News*

## SCORED 92% IN PUC

# *18-year-old NEET aspirant dies by suicide in Kalaburagi*

**KALABURAGI, 24 MAY**

A candidate who had appeared for the NEET exam died by suicide by hanging herself from a fan at home in Kalaburagi city, her father said on Sunday.

The deceased Bhagyashree, 18, was doing well academically and had passed the PUC exam with 92 per cent marks, Rajashekhar told reporters here.

"There was no distress or problem in our family, and we were living happily," he said.

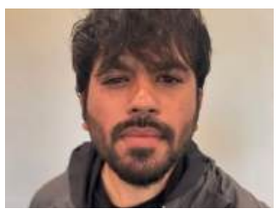
"She had performed well (in NEET), everything was going well. Maybe she had some feelings in her mind about writing it (NEET) again. I do not blame anyone, I do not accuse anyone. We do not know her pain or suffering. What can I say?" Rajashekhar told reporters with tears in his eyes.

A police source said she did not write any death note or give any reason.

A case has been registered in this regard under the jurisdiction of Station Bazaar police station.

NEET-UG held on 3 May was cancelled following allegations of question paper leak, and the NTA has scheduled a re-exam for 21 June. —*PTI*

***Help is available. Please call Tele Manas at 14416, or SAHAI at 080-25497777 for support.***



—INSTAGRAM

## CJP founder's house gets police security

**CHHATRAPATI SAMBHAJINAGAR, 24 MAY**

Police have provided round-the-clock security at Abhijeet Dipke's residence in MIDC Waluj, Maharashtra, to prevent crowding amid social media buzz about the Cockroach Janata Party (CJP). Deputy Commissioner Pankaj Atulkar stated, "This is to ensure there is no crowding at his place since the CJP issue is trending on social media right now." He denied threats, asserting no formal complaints had been received. Dipke claimed on Saturday that all social media accounts and the website of CJP had been taken down or compromised, leaving the group without access to its platforms. —*PTI*

## Kerala gets 2-day holiday for Bakrid

**T'PURAM, 24 MAY**

The Kerala government and its PSU employees can look forward to two consecutive holidays in the middle of next week as the administration on Sunday declared 28 May also as a holiday for Bakrid, in addition to 27 May. In a notification, the General Administration Department said that 27 May had already been declared a holiday for Bakrid. It said that Thursday will be a holiday for all government offices in the state, including PSUs, educational institutions, including professional colleges, and institutions coming under the Negotiable Instruments Act 1881. —*PTI*

—PTI

## Assam to establish cell to counter radicalisation

**GUWAHATI, 24 MAY**

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma announced plans to set up a counter-radicalisation cell to protect vulnerable youth from extremist influence. Sarma stated, "We will not allow any group or individual to mislead our youth and ruin their future by radicalising them. Assam will give it back firmly." He did not specify details about the new initiative but emphasised the government's commitment to safeguarding youth from extremists' threat. "A counter radicalisation cell will be established to protect vulnerable youth from extremist influence," the chief minister said. Sarma, however, did not elaborate on the proposed cell. —*PTI*

# US visa rule changes not aimed at India, says Rubio

### 'Some bumps & friction' likely in visa rules, adds state secy

**NEW DELHI, 24 MAY**

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar flagged India's concerns on Sunday with US Secretary of State Marco Rubio over the Trump administration's changes in US visa policies, prompting Rubio to say that the changes in the visa system was not aimed at India. "It is not targeted at India; it is one that's being applied globally," he said.

Rubio acknowledged that there could be "some bumps" and "friction" in the transition period as the US is trying to improve its immigration system, but ultimately an "efficient" framework will be helpful to everyone.

The US Citizenship and Immigration Services had recently issued a directive requiring foreigners seeking a green card to return to their native countries to apply.

"While we cooperate to deal with illegal mobility, our expectation is that legal mobility would not be adversely impacted. After all, this is relevant to our cooperation," Jaishankar said.

On changes in norms for green card, Rubio said it is part of the overall approach to reforming the existing system.

Union External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar, right, and US Secretary of State Marco Rubio shake hands during a meeting at the Hyderabad House in New Delhi on Sunday—*PTI*

- We had an immigration crisis in the United States. This is not because of India. We have had around 20 million people illegally enter the United States in the last few years, Marco Rubio said

"We've had a migration crisis in the US. This is not because of India, but broadly, we have had over 20 million people illegally enter the US over the last few years," he said.

Jaishankar said while the United States has been forthright in putting forward its foreign policy outlook as "America first", India has an "India first" approach. "So both of us are obviously driven by our respective national interests," he said. — *PTI*

# Cong stabbed DMK in the back, never trust them: Udhayanidhi

**CHENNAI, 24 MAY**

In a blistering attack that solidifies a major split in Tamil Nadu's politics, DMK Youth Wing chief Udhayanidhi Stalin has asked his party cadres to "never trust the Congress again," accusing the former ally of "stabbing the DMK in the back.".

"For over 20 years, the Congress rode on our backs. Today, they have stabbed us in the back. We must never trust the Congress," Udhayanidhi said. The Congress which won five seats in the 23 April Assembly polls as a constituent of the DMK-led Secular Progressive Alliance, switched sides immediately after the results and supported the Vijay-led TVK.

Addressing a DMK Youth Wing meeting here on Saturday, Udhayanidhi launched a tirade against the Congress, pinning the blame for the BJP's victories squarely on the Congress.

He said that he had earlier thought that Prime Minister Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah were the primary drivers behind the BJP's electoral successes. "But that is not the case. The main reason for the BJP's victories is the Congress," he asserted.

Pointing out the DMK's dedication to the alliance, Udhayanidhi highlighted how DMK workers spilled "blood and sweat" to ensure the victory of Congress candidates to keep the BJP out of Tamil Nadu. "A non-existent Congress won five seats only because of the tireless work of DMK cadres," he said.

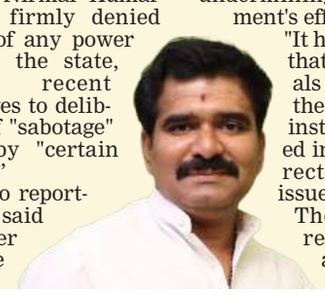
Congress MP B Manickam Tagore slammed the DMK and said that it was frustrated as its plans vis-a-vis Chief Minister Vijay failed. — *PTI*

## No power shortage, someone sabotaging supply: TN neta

**CHENNAI, 24 MAY**

Tamil Nadu Electricity Minister R Nirmal Kumar on Sunday firmly denied allegations of any power shortage in the state, attributing recent power outages to deliberate acts of "sabotage" instigated by "certain individuals."

Speaking to reporters here, he said that 99 per cent of the department's workforce is performing well, but a microscopic minority is undermining the government's efforts.



"It has come to light that some individuals are disrupting the power supply, instigated by vested interests. We are rectifying these issues," Kumar said.

The minister's remarks come amidst sharp criticism from the opposition and reports over power cuts.

Meanwhile, AIADMK general secretary Edappadi K Palaniswami hit out at the TVK government on Sunday over the "unannounced power cuts," across Tamil Nadu and demanded action on a war footing to resolve the crisis. He highlighted the severe hardships being faced by the public due to erratic power supply during peak summer. —*PTI*

# Wangchuk hopeful after talks with Centre

**NEW DELHI, 24 MAY**

The recent talks between Ladakh representatives and the Centre was a "positive step," activist Sonam Wangchuk said, although he cautioned that trust-building in the region remained incomplete, citing unresolved cases from last year's protests, seizure of personal devices and action against institutions linked to the movement.

In an interview with PTI on Saturday following the latest round of discussions with a Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) sub-committee, Wangchuk said he said there was a shift in its outlook after Thursday's meeting but remains cautious."This meeting has made some difference... Otherwise, I was very disappointed," Wangchuk said, reflecting on his earlier experience of being detained this year. He said that the release order referred to creating "an environment of trust" and moving towards "meaningful and constructive dialogue." However, he alleged that the reality on the ground did not reflect these assurances. "Nothing was happening on the ground. People were getting divided in Leh and Kargil, Buddhists fighting Buddhists, Muslims fighting Muslims. We felt there was no trust-building, and meaningful dialogue seemed unlikely," he said.

"Last week there was conflict everywhere. I thought Ladakh would become another Manipur; it was heading in that direction," he said.— *PTI*

## Muslims want cow declared 'national animal' of India

**LUCKNOW, 24 MAY**

Several Muslim organisations are rallying behind a call by the president of the Jamiat Ulama-e-Hind (Arshad Madani faction), Maulana Arshad Madani, to declare the cow as the 'national animal.'

The organisations hope that this will curb the political exploitation of the issue of cow slaughter, and put an end to atrocities like mob lynching committed in its name.

Maulana Shahabuddin Razvi, National President of the All India Muslim Jamaat, said that he wants to forge a consensus among Muslim organisations on this matter.

Siraj Qureshi, President of the All India Qureshi Jamaat, said his organisation would seek a meeting with the prime minister in this regard.

National General Secretary of the All India Shia Personal Law Board, Maulana Yasoob Abbas, remarked that the government's intent regarding the cow should be clearly reflected in its policies.

National Vice President of the Indian Union Muslim League, Kausar Hayat, pointed out that beef is still consumed in Goa, Assam, and northeastern states, most of which are governed by the very same Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), which, in states like Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, and West Bengal, politicises cow slaughter. — *PTI*

**SAFFRON SWEEP**

BJP workers celebrate the party's victory in the Falta by-election in West Bengal on Sunday—*PTI*

# Suvendhu thanks Falta for giving BJP resounding mandate

**NEW DELHI, 24 MAY**

- Claiming that the voters of Falta had regained the freedom to vote after 15 long years, the CM said the result was "just the beginning of a larger political rejection of the TMC party"

West Bengal Chief Minister Suvendu Adhikari thanked the people of Falta for giving a 'resounding mandate' to the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) candidate in the Assembly election from the Falta constituency and accused the TMC of throttling democracy during its rule in the state.

Launching a blistering attack on the Trinamul Congress party (TMC) on Sunday, the Chief Minister said that during its 15 years in power, the party had transformed itself into a "mafia company."

Adhikari also referred to a "fraudster who parachuted in and claimed the title of commander," alleging that democracy had been throttled and asserted that the previous election had been turned into a "farce."

It is seen as an apparent reference to TMC general secretary Diamond Harbour MP Abhishek Banerjee.

Claiming that Falta voters had regained the freedom to vote after 15 years, the chief minister said the result was "just the beginning of a larger political rejection of the TMC."

He claimed that in future elections, the TMC leadership could face a battle even against "NOTA," and added that people of West Bengal were waiting to witness such a contest unfold.

The Trinamul Congress party had held the Falta Assembly seat continuously from 2011 and won it in 2021 with around 57 per cent of the votes polled.

With this victory, the BJP's tally in the Assembly as per Election Commission records for the state rose to 208. — PTI

## Rahul trying to incite riots to topple govt: BJP

**NEW DELHI, 24 MAY**

**"The Congress will not rest until Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan resigns and a fool-proof system is put in place to prevent question paper leaks like in the case of NEET.**

-Rahul Gandhi

The BJP accused Congress leader Rahul Gandhi of conspiring to destabilise the Modi government by "creating anarchy" in the country, and alleged that he was acting at the behest of his "masters" like George Soros and foreign companies who fund his overseas tours.

Several BJP leaders, including Union Minister Piyush Goyal, claimed that Gandhi's "plan" was exposed after he said at a meeting of the advisory council of the Congress' Minority Department on Tuesday that the Modi admin will fall in a year.

In a post on X in Hindi on Sunday, Goyal said Gandhi's statement pointed to a "massive conspiracy" involving the Congress, opposition parties, and what he described as a "toolkit gang," which he alleged harboured dreams of destabilising India.

"This is no ordinary statement. It is a conspiracy aimed at spreading anarchy in the country," he said, sharing a media report which claimed that Gandhi had said at the party meeting that the Modi government would fall within a year.

Goyal said that Gandhi and his "friends" were attempting to "incite violence" across the country after realising that the Congress could not defeat the BJP in elections.

Slamming Gandhi, BJP spokesperson Sambit Patra also accused him of hatching a conspiracy to dislodge the Modi government by inciting riots. — *PTI*

**KONKAN DIVISION MEETING**

# *RSS forced Congress to end Emergency in 1977: Ramlal*

**MUMBAI, 24 MAY**

- The state of Emergency declared by the then Congress government lasted 21 months from 1975 June to 1977 March. In the Lok Sabha elections that followed, the Janata Party came to power

Senior RSS leader Ramlal said that had Sangh workers not taken part in the "Satyagraha" against the Emergency in large numbers, the Indira Gandhi government would not have called general elections in 1977.

Ramlal, who is the Akhil Bharatiya Sampark Pramukh (outreach head) of the RSS, was speaking at the concluding function of a meeting of the Sangh's Konkan division here on Saturday.

"If RSS volunteers had not participated in Satyagraha in large numbers during the Emergency, the government would not have announced elections, and the Janata Party would not have come to power. India would have had an authoritarian regime for a long time," he said.

Around 80 per cent of those imprisoned during the Emergency were RSS workers, Ramlal said, adding that he himself spent eight months in jail during that period.

The state of Emergency declared by the then Congress government lasted 21 months from 1975 June to 1977 March. In the elections that followed, the Janata Party came to power.

Ramlal said, "In all the wars India faced, RSS volunteers stood shoulder to shoulder with Indian jawans."

Citing one instance, he said air-dropped military supplies had fallen in a danger zone. "The jawans could have attracted enemy attention. Someone told them there was a village nearby where RSS volunteers gather. RSS volunteers crawled to the site where the supplies had fallen and brought them back. four people died in this," he said.

Many people who fled to India during partition credited RSS for their survival, Ramlal said. — *PTI*

## Mann draws flak over ASI murder, violence in Kapurthala jail

**CHANDIGARH, 24 MAY**

Opposition parties in Punjab lashed out at the AAP government over the killing of a Punjab Police ASI and the Kapurthala jail incident, alleging that it has lost the "moral" authority to continue amid "complete lawlessness and anarchy."

Leaders of the Congress, the BJP and the Shiromani Akali Dal targeted the Bhagwant Mann government over the law and order situation, claiming that nobody was safe.

An ASI was shot dead by two motorcycle-borne assailants in Amritsar on Sunday. The body of ASI Joga Singh was found near the Fatehgarh Churian-Majithia road.

In another incident, inmates ran amok in the Kapurthala jail after a clash. The police lobbed teargas shells and resorted to a cane-charge to restore order late on Saturday.

Punjab Congress president Amrinder Singh Raja Warring said that the AAP has lost the "moral authority" to continue in power. — *PTI*

# Raj Thackeray cleared in 2008 assault case

The court said the prosecution had failed to prove the MNS chief's presence at the spot where the violence occurred —*ANI*

**THANE, 24 MAY**

A Thane court acquitted Raj Thackeray, 57, and five others in a 2008 case of alleged assault on Railway Recruitment Board examinees at Kalyan station. The court observed that the prosecution failed to prove beyond a reasonable doubt the Maharashtra Navnirman Sena (MNS) chief's presence or that he incited the attack.

The CD containing the alleged inciting speech by Thackeray was never produced or proved in court. It was also acknowledged that witnesses could have been injured during a following stampede. Moreover, key eyewitnesses failed to identify the accused in court.

On the night of 17 and 18 October 2008, candidates from UP and Bihar were reportedly attacked by men armed with wooden sticks, shouting "MNS Zindabad." — *PTI*

## Prashanth Kishore may contest from Bihar's Bankipur

**PATNA, 24 MAY**

Prashant Kishor's Jan Suraaj Party (JSP) could contest in a by-poll to the Bankipur seat in Bihar, a Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) stronghold for decades. The seat has been vacated by the BJP's Nitin Nabin, who got elected to the Rajya Sabha, leading to a by-poll within six months.

Kishor claimed that the Bankipur assembly by-poll would be a "referendum on the first year of the ruling (National Democratic Alliance)" after its big win in the state in 2025. He avoided answering whether he could be the candidate, however.

He also dismissed rumours of a rift with Uday Singh, the JSP's national president, who recently announced a "one-year break from active politics." —*PTI*

## 19 get life in jail in 2016 Odisha clash case

**NABARANGPUR, 24 MAY**

Nineteen people were sentenced to life imprisonment by a court in Odisha's Nabarangpur district in a 2016 clash between two groups over cultivating a patch of government land at nearby Telgaon village that left three persons dead.Additional District Judge Sunita Patnaik pronounced the verdict on Saturday after examining witnesses, testimonies and documentary evidence. According to the prosecution, Balaram Harijan of Baunshbeda village had been cultivating a patch of government land at nearby Telgaon village. Tribal villagers opposed it and urged the Forest Department to plant saplings there. Balaram allegedly uprooted the saplings, triggering tension in the area and the resultant killings. Police registered two separate cases and arrested the accused persons, government counsel Ashok Kumar Padhi said. *—PTI*

# CBSE to refund students overcharged due to glitch

### Says high traffic on portal caused technical disruptions

**NEW DELHI, 24 MAY**

The Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) on Sunday said it will issue refunds to students who were overcharged during the class 12 post-result process due to technical issues.

This comes a day after Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan sought a detailed report from the CBSE over complaints of technical glitches faced by students during the re-evaluation process.

In a notice, the CBSE said that on 21 and 22 May, certain technical issues led to incorrect fee deductions in some cases while students were applying for scanned copies of evaluated answer books, it said.

"In some instances, excess payment was deducted, while in others, lesser amounts were charged," it said.

The CBSE said that in all cases of excess payment, the "exact excess amounts shall be refunded to the same payment method which was used for payment".

In some instances, excess payment was deducted from students, while in others, lesser amounts were charged *—ANI*

"Similarly, in cases where lesser payment was deducted, candidates shall be informed separately regarding payment of the balance amount, if required," it said.

"Scanned copies of the evaluated answer books shall be provided in all such cases, without candidates being required to submit fresh requests," it added.

On Wednesday, Pradhan took serious cognisance of issues related to server downtime, payment gateway glitches and operational lapses reported during the process, sources said.

In a statement issued on Saturday, the CBSE had said that it was monitoring all reported issues and taking corrective measures, including extension of timelines and technical interventions.

- This comes a day after Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan sought a detailed report from the CBSE over complaints of technical glitches faced by students during the re-evaluation process

"Parents and students are requested not to feel anxious if they have encountered such issues. The very purpose of the verification and re-evaluation mechanism is to address genuine concerns in a structured and fair manner," the statement said.

It had said that due to exceptionally high traffic on the portal, some technical disruptions were experienced during peak periods. *—PTI*

# Vijay assures justice to family of 10-yr-old rape-murder victim

**SALEM/ COIMBATORE, 24 MAY**

The Tamil Nadu Chief Minister C Joseph Vijay has spoken to the family of a 10-year-old girl who was allegedly sexually assaulted and killed in Coimbatore, over the phone and assured them that justice would be ensured, the victim's grandmother said on Sunday.

"He (CM) spoke to us and assured justice. He also enquired about us and whether we have a house. He said he was with us and not to worry," she told reporters.

The sexual assault and brutal murder of the child in Coimbatore's Sulur has led to shock and outrage across Tamil Nadu.

Two men, including an acquaintance of the girl, have been arrested in connection with the incident. Two of the suspects are **Mohan (top pic) and Karthik.**

Meanwhile, in Coimbatore, West Zone Inspector General of Police R V Ramya Bharathi on Sunday said that senior officers will be coming for a preliminary review of the case.

"The only two persons involved have been promptly arrested. In view of the sensitivity of the case, senior officers will be coming for preliminary review," she told ANI.

Earlier, IGP Bharati said in a press conference that the case is being altered to include the provisions of the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, 2012, due to the assault of a minor.

She said the girl went missing on 21 May at around 5pm. The police reached the spot immediately after receiving the information and registered a case regarding the missing child. *—PTI*

*—ANI*

## Teen tourist dies after scuffle with guards in Varanasi

**VARANASI, 24 MAY**

A 17-year-old tourist from Sonbhadra died on Sunday after an alleged scuffle with private security guards at the Namo Ghat in Varanasi, police said. Kotwali Assistant Commissioner of Police Vijay Pratap Singh said that in the incident, which occurred in the early hours of the day in the Namo Ghat area under the Adampur police station limits, four persons have been detained.He said a group of tourists from Sonbhadra had come to visit the ghat had an argument with private security guards deployed there. The altercation soon turned violent and one person, identified as Rajesh Chintu, 17, sustained injuries.The injured boy was rushed to the divisional hospital, where doctors declared him dead, Singh said. *—PTI*

# Delhi Gymkhana Club to seek clarity on handover

**NEW DELHI, 24 MAY**

The Delhi Gymkhana Club has said that it will write to the Land and Development Office seeking clarity on several issues after the Centre asked the club to hand over its premises by 5 June.

In an official communication to its members, the club said the Centre has asked it to hand over its premises in Lutyens' Delhi to "strengthen and secure defence infrastructure" and for other public security purposes.

The club said it received the notice on 22 May from the Land and Development Office (L&DO) under the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, seeking "re-entry and resumption" of the 27.3-acre land parcel, which is located on 2, Safdarjung Road, adjacent to the prime minister's residence on Lok Kalyan Marg.

"Pursuant to the sudden development, the Gymkhana Club met today on an urgent basis and after detailed deliberation decided to file an immediate response to the L&DO requesting clarity on several issues in the interest of the members and employees of the club," it said.

The club also said that it has sought an urgent appointment with the officials of the housing and urban affairs ministry. "The immediate priority of the club is to ensure that its operations continue without dislocation," the club. *—PTI*

# Twisha cremated after 2nd autopsy

**NEW DELHI, 24 MAY**

Former model-turned-actor Twisha Sharma, a Noida woman who died at her marital home in Bhopal on 12 May due to alleged dowry harassment, was cremated on Sunday after a team of doctors from AIIMS Delhi completed the second postmortem of her body.

Emotional scenes unfolded at Bhadbhada Vishram Ghat in Bhopal, where the last rites were performed after 5pm. Twisha's mother and other members of the family were inconsolable as the funeral pyre was lit after performing rituals.

"Today, we are going to bid farewell to a daughter, a sister, a friend and an innocent life. The daughter who had begun a new phase of life with dreams has left us all too soon. The vacant eyes of parents, shattered dreams, and every passing moment spent waiting for justice raise a silent question before society," Twisha's father, Navnidhi Sharma, told PTI earlier in the day.

Harshit Sharma, brother of former model-turned-actor Twisha Sharma, performs rituals during her last rites, at Bhadbhada Vishram Ghat in Bhopal on Sunday; her mother Rekha Sharma breaks down *—PTI*

- Twisha Sharma, 33, was found hanging at her matrimonial home in Bhopal's Katara Hills area on 12 May, with her family accusing her in-laws of dowry harassment and abetment to suicide

Twisha, 33, was found hanging at her matrimonial home in Bhopal's Katara Hills area on 12 May, with her family accusing her in-laws of dowry harassment and abetment to suicide. Her in-laws, however, claimed she suffered from drug addiction.

The police have registered an FIR against Twisha's husband, Samarth Singh, who is a lawyer, and her mother-in-law and former district judge Giribala Singh on charges of harassment for dowry.

Samarth Singh was arrested in Jabalpur on Friday after remaining absconding for 10 days. A Bhopal court on Saturday sent him to a seven-day police remand. *—PTI*

*—FREEPIK*

## Tiger kills woman in MP, then dies during rescue ops

**UMARIA, 24 MAY**

A tiger strayed into a residential area near the Bandhavgarh Tiger Reserve (BTR) in Madhya Pradesh's Umaria district early on Sunday, killing a woman and injuring three others before dying during a rescue operation, officials said.

The attack occurred around 3am in the Kherwa Tola of Panpatha village near the reserve, following which angry locals allegedly assaulted a forest ranger and manhandled a woman staffer while protesting against repeated tiger attacks in the area.

The reserve's Field Director Anupam Sahay said the tiger entered the village and attacked residents, killing Phool Bai Pal, 40.

He said the animal later entered the victim's house, where it died amid the rescue operation.

"When we darted the big cat to tranquilise it, it remained unresponsive, suggesting it was already dead," Sahay said, denying that it died due to a tranquiliser overdose. A postmortem is being conducted.

The official said angry villagers, protesting repeated tiger attacks, assaulted forest ranger Prateek Shrivastava, injuring him, and also manhandled a woman forest staffer. Villagers said forest officials failed to respond promptly despite repeated calls for help after the tiger entered the locality. *—PTI*

# Delhi blast suspect used AI platform for 'terror engineering'

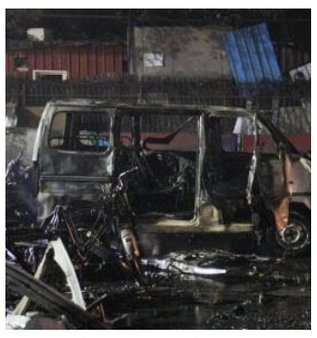
**NEW DELHI, 24 MAY**

The NIA probe into the Delhi Red Fort area car blast found that a charge-sheeted suspect, linked to an offshoot of the global terrorist outfit Al-Qaida, allegedly misused an artificial intelligence (AI) platform for "terror engineering," official sources said on Sunday.

They said the accused had also made rocket IEDs and tested them in the Qazigund forest in J&K's Anantnag district.

The findings are part of a 7,500-page chargesheet filed by the NIA on 14 May in connection with the high-intensity vehicle-borne IED blast that rocked the capital on 10 November 2025.

The chargesheet, submitted before a special NIA court here, details what officials described as a meticulous, "almost laboratory-grade" approach adopted by the accused in the fabrication and use of IEDs.



One of the charge-sheeted accused emerged as the "in-house engineer" of the Ansar Ghazwat-ul-Hind (AGuH) interim terror module, linked to Al-Qaida in the Indian Subcontinent (AQIS).

AQIS and all its offshoots have been notified as terrorist organisations by the Union Ministry of Home Affairs.

The accused, Jasir Bilal Wani, had stayed at the Al Falah University campus in Faridabad on two to three occasions during 2024-25 to provide "technical support" to the conspiracy, the chargesheet said. *—PTI*

## Ammo cache found in J&K's Baramulla

Security forces have recovered a cache of ammunition from a terrorist hideout in the Baramulla district of Jammu and Kashmir, officials said on Sunday.

The police, army and the Central Reserve Police Force launched a search and destroy operation based on information about a terrorist hideout there, the officials said.

During the search, the security forces recovered 14 rocket-propelled grenades and nine boosters. The police have taken launched an investigation into it, the officials said. *—PTI*

# Trainer aircraft makes emergency landing in UP

**ALIGARH, 24 MAY**

A two-seater trainer aircraft of a private flying club made an emergency landing in an agricultural field here after it developed a technical snag during a training sortie on Sunday, officials said.

An instructor and a trainee pilot of the Pioneer Flying Club managed to disembark safely from the aircraft, the officials said.

The aircraft landed safely in a field in Changeyri village under the Harduaganj police station area in Uttar Pradesh around 9.30am. The aircraft did not suffer any major damage, they said.

City Magistrate Atul Gupta told reporters that airport authorities received information about the emergency landing shortly after the incident.

The instructor pilot, Asad, and the trainee pilot, Krunal Kasana, disembarked safely from the aircraft and did not suffer any injuries. The two were later taken to the district hospital in Aligarh for a routine medical examination, Gupta said.

The Airports Authority of India (AAI) has ordered a probe into the incident, the officials said. *—PTI*

The two-seater private club plane *—PTI FILE*

## Missing medico found begging in Mumbai

**MUMBAI, 24 MAY**

The Mumbai police's anti-begging drive led to the rescue of a 25-year-old medical student from Nanded, who was suffering from mental health issues and begging on the streets after going missing for 47 days, officials said on Sunday.

According to the police, the youth, a third-year student of Bachelor of Homoeopathic Medicine and Surgery (BHMS), went missing en route to his college in Jalgaon on April 4, lost his bag and phone during the train journey, and ultimately ended up stranded and begging for food in Mumbai.

"The youth appeared physically weak and was unable to respond clearly to questions due to his mental state. However, he managed to share his name and hometown," the official from the Malad police station said.

The details were verified with the Tamsa police station in Nanded, where a missing persons complaint had been registered in his name, he said.

Investigations revealed that Abhay had lost all his belongings, including his mobile phone and identity documents, during his train journey to Jalgaon. Stranded in Mumbai without money or means of communication, he resorted to begging, the official said. *—PTI*

**FLOURIDE CAUSING DISEASES**

# *R'than sees health crisis due to contaminated groundwater*

**JAIPUR, 24 MAY**

Rajasthan is facing a worsening groundwater and public health crisis, with fluoride contamination, falling water tables and rising disease burden affecting large parts of the state, according to a vulnerability analysis prepared by BJP leader Vijay Singh Bainsla.

The study, based on groundwater reports, district fact sheets, NITI Aayog multidimensional poverty data and health indicators from 2015 to 2024, said the state's groundwater crisis had become "structural rather than cyclical" as extraction exceeded annual recharge every year during the period under review.

Groundwater extraction exceeded annual recharge every year *—PTI FILE*

According to the analysis, groundwater extraction reached 151 per cent of annual recharge in 2022. It meant 1.51 litres were pumped out for every litre naturally replenished. The state's groundwater overdraft touched 4.43 billion cubic metres that year.

The number of over-exploited groundwater blocks in the state rose from 198 in 2015 to 219 in 2022, while safe-category blocks declined from 52 to 38 during the same period, the report said.

It said pre-monsoon groundwater depth deteriorated from 24.5 metres below ground level in 2015 to 28.8 metres in 2024.

"Critical and over-exploited blocks now account for nearly four out of every five groundwater blocks in Rajasthan," the analysis said.

The study also examined the impact of poor water quality on health outcomes, particularly in Rajasthan's western fluoride belt covering Nagaur, Barmer, Jalore, Jodhpur, Sikar, and Jhunjhunu.

According to the analysis, 17 districts exceed the Bureau of Indian Standards permissible fluoride limit of 1.5 milligrams per litre, with Nagaur recording the highest fluoride concentration at 5.8 mg/L, almost four times the prescribed limit.

Citing ICMR-linked survey data, the report said 68 per cent of people in Nagaur showed signs of dental fluorosis and 24 per cent suffered from skeletal fluorosis.

The analysis said prolonged consumption of fluoride-contaminated water could lead to irreversible skeletal damage, kidney ailments and cardiovascular stress. *—PTI*

# DOWRY DEATHS: WHY PARENTS IGNORE 'TAKE ME HOME' PLEAS

"Please take me home..." Trapped in abusive marriages and allegedly taunted for not bringing in enough dowry, that was perhaps the sentiment if not the words that echoed hollow in the last days of three young women found dead in their marital homes this month.

Because Twisha Sharma in Bhopal, Deepika Nagar in Noida and Palak Ranjan in Gwalior never could go back to the safety of their parental homes. Their deaths clouded in allegations of dowry demands, their parents grieving and in despair.

All their families alleged that the in-laws demanded dowry and harassed their daughters mentally and physically. Reframed in discourse as gifts and lavish parties, dowry is not stigmatised but divorce is.

There are 59,446 cases under Section 80 of Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, earlier Section 304B of Indian Penal Code, pending for trial in different courts with a conviction rate of just about 46 per cent.

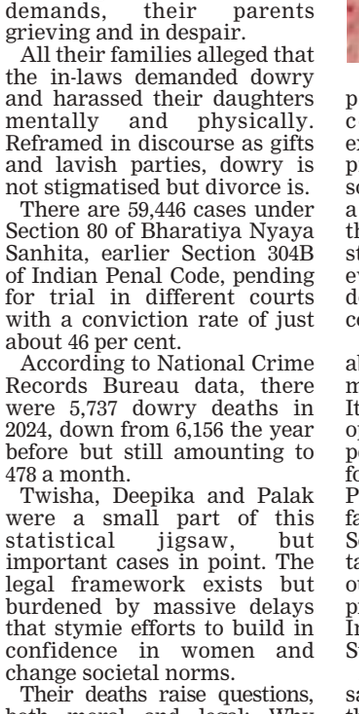
According to National Crime Records Bureau data, there were 5,737 dowry deaths in 2024, down from 6,156 the year before but still amounting to 478 a month.

Twisha, Deepika and Palak were a small part of this statistical jigsaw, but important cases in point. The legal framework exists but burdened by massive delays that stymie efforts to build in confidence in women and change societal norms.

Their deaths raise questions, both moral and legal: Why couldn't their families take them home? Why didn't they seek help? Isn't the law in their favour? Will they ever find justice?

### THE QUESTIONS HAUNT

The answers, according to experts, reveal a social structure that restricts a woman's autonomy through psychological conditioning, expectations of propriety and social shame, and a legal ecosystem that despite being strong is burdened by an ever-increasing pile of pending dowry death cases and low conviction rates.



Palak Ranjan of Gwalior

Navnidhi Sharma and Rekha Sharma, parents of model-turned-actor Twisha Sharma (top), arrive at AIIMS Bhopal to take the mortal remains of their daughter after the second postmortem; (left) Deepika Nagar —ANI

**16 women die every day in India because of dowry**

"It's not that at present I'm not able to walk out, I do. I have money and I have everything. It's more about 'do I have the option of walking out?' 'Will people accept me?'" asked forensic psychologist Dr Deepti Puranik. "Then there are factors like family and children. So is the person actually free to take the decision of walking out...," added Puranik, associate professor at the Narsee Monjee Institute of Management Studies in Mumbai.

As she sees it, caught in the same trap of societal stigma, the parents mostly don't help much either.

The despair set in early in their marriages for all three women, each reaching out to her family in the hours and days leading to death.

On 12 May, Twisha was found hanging in her marital after five months of a troubled marriage. Palak ended her life, the same day, the same way, in Gwalior after barely a year of marriage. Five days later and hundreds of kilometres away, Deepika allegedly jumped from her in-laws' Greater Noida home on 17 May, soon after her parents came to mediate with them upon receiving her frantic calls.

### MILES APART BUT SAME STORIES

Twisha, an MBA graduate and model, had remained in touch with her family till hours before her death, pleading with them to take her home. In alleged chats leaked online, the 33-year-old tells her mother about her struggles.

In his complaint to police, Deepika's father Sanjeev Nagar alleged that he received a phone call from his daughter on the afternoon of 17 May during which she was crying and told him that her in-laws were assaulting her over dowry. The 24-year-old died later that day.

Media reports say Rajak, a 21-year-old Instagram content creator with over 10,000 followers, allegedly called her brother barely 30 minutes before her death. In the weeks leading up to the fateful day, she had been posting reels hinting at mental stress and emotional breakdown.

### WHY DO FAMILIES ACT A LITTLE TOO LATE?

"From childhood, people tell their daughters that ultimately marriage is about prestige," Puranik said. Supreme Court lawyer Seema Kushwaha, who represented the victim's family in the 2012 Delhi Nirbhaya gangrape and murder, agreed. Parents, she said, expect their daughters "to adjust and save the marriage at any cost".

"Such is the social structure we live in that divorce and remarriage are still not socially accepted in many sections of society... Independence is encouraged conditionally, not as a woman's right, but as a social necessity," Kushwaha said.

Twisha Sharma and Samarth Singh on their wedding day

Bombay High Court advocate and activist Abha Singh added that dowry is largely accepted in society with no social shaming attached to lavish weddings and expensive gifts.

### MODERN-DAY DOWRY

"There's no social stigma, no social boycott for dowry. Dowry now comes in different forms. It is a five-star wedding, a destination wedding, chartered flights for guests and whatnot. It has been normalised because it has become a status symbol," Singh said.

Swift justice is rare. Poor forensic reports, evidence collection, wrong section in chargesheet, withdrawal from the woman's family and long-drawn trials lead to low conviction rates, which further embolden offenders, said Kushwaha.

She said Section 80 of BNS puts the burden of proving innocence on the accused if a woman dies within seven years of her marriage and a history of cruelty against the bride can be established.

"There are children involved. So the girl's parents feel that if the father goes to jail, who will take care of the kids? And they withdraw the case. Second is the forensics is not done properly, evidence not collected properly. If the chargesheet is not foolproof, the defense is always there to attack," Singh said.

In dowry deaths where it appears difficult to frame charges, former IPS officer Kiran Bedi suggested that it is best to gather all evidence both from the in-laws' side and regarding the accusations made by the parents. —*PTI*

**LETTERS** write to us at salarenglishdigital@gmail.com

# SALAR

## Brutal heat batters birds and strays

As Delhi reels under an intense heatwave, veterinarians and animal rescuers across the capital say birds are collapsing mid-flight, stray animals are suffering severe dehydration and infections, and distress calls linked to heat-related illnesses have surged sharply in recent weeks.

With temperatures crossing 45°C in several parts of Delhi-NCR, prolonged dry weather and scorching conditions are taking a visible toll on animals and birds struggling to survive outdoors.

Veterinarians say pigeons are among the worst affected. A doctor at Abhay Daanam Bird and Animal Hospital said the facility is now receiving nearly 20 bird cases daily linked to heat-related illnesses, marking around a 50 per cent increase in recent weeks.

"Most of the birds coming to us are pigeons suffering from pigeon pox, which spreads more rapidly during periods of extreme heat and poor conditions," the veterinarian said. Horses and cows are also being brought in with dehydration, heat strokes and immobility.

Pigeon pox, a viral disease-causing lesion, weakness and feeding difficulties, worsens under extreme heat and unhygienic surroundings, experts said.

Another veterinarian working in Shahdara and Chandni Chowk said he is currently handling nearly 70 to 80 cases daily involving birds suffering dehydration, breathlessness and heat distress.

"Most of the cases are pigeons, black kites and eagles. Many are brought in unconscious due to the heatwave. We administer ORS and fluids to revive them," he said, adding that some birds arrive in critical condition and cannot be saved.

Animal welfare groups say street animals are also facing growing health risks during the summer.

Manta Sidhu from People For Animals said stray dogs and cats are increasingly suffering from dehydration and gastrointestinal infections caused by consuming rotting waste.

"Garbage decays much faster during summer. When animals eat from dumps or garbage trucks, they suffer toxicity and gastro infections. Pig fever is also becoming a major issue," she said.

Sidhu urged residents to keep bowls of drinking water and shaded resting areas for animals in their neighbourhoods.

Abhishek Jain of Vidyasagar Jeev Daya Parivaar, which operates bird ambulance services across Delhi-NCR, said the organisation is receiving around 40 distress calls daily related to birds affected by heat strokes and dehydration — a rise of nearly 30 per cent.

"Eagles account for a large share of rescues during this heatwave. Unlike pigeons, they do not have easy access to water or food left out by residents and are often found severely dehydrated and unconscious," he said.

His brother Amit Jain, chairperson of the NGO, said the organisation has begun distributing 10,000 earthen water pots free of cost to encourage residents to place them outside homes for birds and stray animals.

"Once birds become unconscious, they are also vulnerable to attacks by other animals, leading to additional injuries," he said.

Experts say rapid urbanisation and shrinking green cover are compounding the problem.

Pankaj Gupta of Bird Count India said most resident bird species in Delhi are naturally adapted to high temperatures, but loss of wetlands and water access is making survival increasingly difficult.

"The real problem is rapid urbanisation, reduction in wetlands and shrinking green spaces. Birds are unable to access enough water," he said.

Gupta advised residents to place bowls of clean water in shaded areas and refill them at least twice a day.

"If water is kept in direct sunlight, bacteria grows quickly. Clean bowls and fresh water can go a long way in helping birds survive the summer," he said, adding that birds generally do not require feeding as they can find food independently.

A Delhi-based veterinarian said peacocks, kites and other large birds are increasingly arriving with dehydration, exhaustion and heat stress, while street dogs and cats are being treated for breathlessness and fatigue caused by extreme weather.

"Heat stress affects birds' movement, feeding patterns and ability to fly. Dehydration is becoming extremely common this season," the veterinarian said.

Animal welfare organisations and veterinarians have appealed to Delhi residents to place earthen bowls filled with clean water on balconies, rooftops and outside homes to help birds and stray animals cope with the severe summer conditions. —*PTI*

Dead fish seen in Sanjay lake as water dried up due to the scorching heat in New Delhi —ANI

# *Israel tasered us, unleased dog: Flotilla activists allege rape, assault*

Activists detained when their flotilla attempted to breach Israel's naval blockade of Gaza say they have been mistreated at the hands of Israeli soldiers, describing beatings, tasers and attack dogs.

The Global Sumud Flotilla of 50 boats was intercepted in international waters 400km off Israel's coast, and activists along with journalists and at least one lawmaker from Italy were transferred onto military boats and brought to a larger military vessel at Ashdod port in southern Israel, where they were held in containers. They told The Associated Press they were punched and kicked, as well as dragged and pulled by their hair.

Israel's Far-Right security minister Itamar Ben-Gvir sparked outrage after promoting a video of himself taunting activists from a flotilla. Foreign leaders have condemned his on-camera treatment of the detainees and several countries summoned Israeli envoys to air their concerns.

Some 420 activists departed for Turkey on Thursday after they were deported from Israel, many wearing gray sweatsuits and Arab kaffiyehs.

The AP spoke to some Thursday and Friday as they reached Istanbul, Athens and other European cities:

**Zeynel Abidin Ozkan, Turkish flotilla board member**

He detailed being held in a container alongside other detainees and he said some people were taken outside the containers where he heard them being physically assaulted.

"We faced periods where we couldn't stand, our heads were bowed to the ground, we were dragged and pulled by our hair. The handcuffs left serious marks on us."

After arriving at Ashdod port, Ozkan says he was denied the right to contact his lawyer, embassy officials or relatives back home. He describes being told to sign papers under duress, which he refused.

"When we refused to sign, they treated us like prisoners, creating a file, taking photos, forcibly handcuffing our hands and feet with iron shackles. And then, with the soldiers, dragged us along the ground, surrounded by dogs, releasing the dogs on us, before loading us into prison trucks."

**Christopher Boren, activist from Hawaii**

"When we got to Ashdod port, I was immediately grabbed by five IDF (soldiers) or police officers. They put my head down and started beating me. One of them had gloves on with hardened plastic and he started punching my face and it swelled shut," he said.

The video of Israel's National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir mocking flotilla detainees while making them kneel has sparked worldwide condemnation. Following this, France barred Ben-Gvir from entering the country — X/ITAMAR BEN-GVIR

**Alessandro Mantovani, Italian journalist for the daily Il Fatto Quotidiano**

"During the crossing, we were put on our knees, blindfolded, and told to make sure the blindfold didn't move. And there's absolutely no possibility in this situation to say I'm a member of parliament' or I'm a journalist'"

"They put you flat on the ground, then on your knees, with zip ties on your wrists. The blindfold, plus an additional zip tie securing your wrists down to a metal structure, just a few inches from the deck. So you're forced to travel in an extremely uncomfortable position on rough concrete. And I had cramps in my legs the whole time, obviously."

After they were transferred to a ship that was used for detention "the treatment became immediately more violent. We entered through this small hatch and were shoved and dragged by force with our arms twisted behind our backs, forced to kneel in front of a wall with our heads down".

At one point, he was thrown down "flat on my stomach, hands behind my back, face pressed, head pressed against the soaking wet and dirty floor of this ship -- pressed down with their feet -- and then they pressed my hands behind my back."

Once inside the container, "I was kicked in the shin. Honestly, I don't expect it. And they say 'Welcome to Israel.' Then a punch to the face, one from this side, one from that side. A closed-fist punch. I moved to get up and I got kicked in the leg. A little jolt from a taser to the ribs. And then I make it out the other side of this container and reach the deck."

Mantovani said he was also strip searched, and his eye glasses and wallet discarded.

**Yiannis Atmatzidis, Greek activist**

"I was struck with a taser, beaten with punches and kicks, insulted and humiliated."

Atmatzidis said he was being processed for identification when Ben-Gvir was touring the prison ship.

"The minister entered the room and asked me where I was from. I replied, from Greece. He then asked why I was there, and I told him that I had come to deliver humanitarian aid to people who needed it. He responded, 'Are you a friend of Hamas?' I explained that our mission had no political agenda and was purely humanitarian."

He added: "Whenever we told them that circulation was being cut off and our hands were going numb, they showed absolutely no mercy. I do not have the words to describe the brutality and cruelty of these people. It is something I will never forget." —*PTI*

– WIKIPEDIA

## Venezuela's Machado to run for Presidency again

**PANAMA CITY, 24 MAY**

Venezuela's Nobel Peace Prize laureate Maria Corina Machado announced she plans to run for president again and intends to return to Venezuela before 2026. Speaking in Panama with opposition leaders, she said they remain committed to a democratic transition "through free and fair presidential elections, where all Venezuelans inside and outside the country vote". The timing of elections remains uncertain. Machado, in exile, also criticised US policy, noting that the Trump administration has praised former president Nicolas Maduro's successor, Delcy Rodríguez, who has opened Venezuela's oil industry to US investment. Meanwhile, the US military conducted a rapid response exercise involving in Caracas on Saturday, over four months after Maduro's ouster. *–PTI*

## Serbian protesters clash with cops in Belgrade

**BELGRADE, 23 MAY**

Clashes erupted between protesters and riot police following a major anti-government rally in Belgrade attended by tens of thousands opposing President Aleksandar Vucic. While the rally at a central square was largely peaceful, young demonstrators later split from the main event, throwing flares, rocks, and bottles at police, who responded with pepper spray. The protesters, believed to be mainly football hooligans, rolled trash cans as shields. Police deployed anti-riot vehicles to prevent their return. Earlier, many carried banners with the "Students win" motto, demanding early elections and rule of law. Vucic has attempted to curb student-led protests over a 2024 train disaster that killed 16, reflecting ongoing unrest in Serbia. *–PTI*

## Turkey's oppn stand-off deepens over court ruling

**ANKARA, 24 MAY**

Members of Turkey's main Opposition party, CHP, are locked in a tense stand-off outside their headquarters, refusing entry to the court-ordered leadership. The appeals court nullified the November 2023 congress, which elected Ozgur Ozel as leader, suspending him and his team, and reinstating Kemal Kilicdaroglu and previous officials. The opposition claims the move was politically motivated to weaken the party amid legal cases targeting members. Kilicdaroglu, 77, stepped down after a 13-year leadership, while Ozel's 2024 municipal victory challenged President Erdogan. Most party members support Ozel, with police called to resolve the impasse. Erdogan, in power since 2003, faces an early election, with his main rival, Ekrem Imamoglu, imprisoned since March 2025. *–PTI*

## Norway's 'Fjord' wins Palme d'Or at Cannes

**CANNES, 24 MAY**

Cristian Mungiu's Norwegian-set film 'Fjord' has won the Palme d'Or, Cannes' top prize, for the second time. The Romanian director, known for '4 Months, 3 Weeks and 2 Days', received praise for 'Fjord', which explores "left-wing fundamentalism" and societal division. The film stars Sebastian Stan and Renate Reinsve as Romanian Evangelicals whose children are taken by Norwegian child services for spanking them. Mungiu said, "Today society is split, divided, radicalised. This film is a pledge against fundamentalism and for empathy and inclusion." Neon, the film's distributor, continues its streak of Palme d'Or wins, including last year's 'It Was Just an Accident' and 2024's 'Anora'. *–PTI*

# Iran may give up uranium to sell oil

## Bibi: Israel to retain right to strike Hezbollah

The US would waive sanctios on Iranian oil to allow Tehran to export oil *–TANSIM NEWS AGENCY*

**CAIRO, 24 MAY**

The proposed deal between Iran and the US, which President Donald Trump said was "largely negotiated" includes Iran giving up its enriched uranium, the Strait of Hormuz reopening, and Washington waiving sanctions on Tehran to allow the Persian majority country to export oil.

Trump announced on Truth Social that he held talks with the leaders of Pakistan, Israel, the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Egypt, Turkey and Qatar about Iran, and that the final stages of a memorandum are being discussed.

Notably, this comes shortly after Pakistan Field Marshal Asim Munir visited Tehran and held a series of talks with Iranian leaders, as well as Trump's visit to China.

However, Iran has not publicly commented on the deal per se.

Iran's President Masoud Pezeshkian told state TV they were ready "to assure the world that we are not after a nuclear weapon."

However, one official, with direct knowledge of the negotiations, said that how Iran would give up the uranium would be subject to further talks during a 60-day period. Some would likely be diluted, while the rest would be transferred to a third country, the official said. Russia has offered to take it.

Iran has 440.9 kilograms of uranium that is enriched up to 60 per cent purity.

Additionally, under the emerging agreement, the Strait of Hormuz would gradually reopen in parallel with the US ending its blockade, the officials said. Sanction relief for Iran would also be discussed during the 60 period.

However, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said that Trump had reaffirmed Israel's right to defend itself "on every front, including Lebanon."

Iran has consistently stated that any deal must include ending the war on all fronts, including Lebanon.

More than 3,000 people have been killed in Lebanon after Israel bombarded the country claiming to target Hezbollah. Nearly a million people have been displaced

The Iranian-backed militant group, which started firing rockets at Israel after the killing of former supreme leader Ali Khamenei has killed at least 22 Israeli soldiers.

Despite the progress on the diplomatic front, Iran claimed military readiness, warning against strikes.

"The country's powerful Armed Forces are at their highest level of readiness and active deterrence in all missile, air, naval, land, space, and cyber dimensions. Therefore, it is obvious that any renewed aggression by the enemy will result in a devastating and hellish response at the regional and extra-regional level," the IRGC stated.

*—Agencies*

# 24 killed, 70 injured as BLA bombs train in Pak

**KARACHI, 24 MAY**

At least 24 people were killed and nearly 70 injured after a powerful explosion ripped through a shuttle train in Pakistan's Balochistan province on Sunday, authorities said. The banned Baloch Liberation Army (BLA) claimed responsibility for the blast.

The train was going from Quetta Cantonment station to the City Railway station when it was targeted near Chaman Phatak, Pakistan's Railways Minister, Hanif Abbasi said, adding that the explosion had hit the engine and three bogies.

The noise and impact of the explosion were so loud that the glass of nearby vehicles and buildings shattered.

A BLA spokesperson claimed that the group attacked the train as it was carrying military personnel, but Abbasi said civilians were killed.

Many of the people killed were travelling to catch connecting trains to their hometowns for the Eid Holidays.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif expressed grief with the victims and said that "such cowardly acts of terrorism cannot weaken the resolve of the people of Pakistan"

The Peshawar-bound Jaffar Express was stopped at Quetta Railway Station as a precautionary measure, and an emergency was declared in government hospitals across Quetta.

Notably, in November 2024, at least 32 people were killed and scores injured when a suicide bomber hit the Quetta Cantt Railway Station. *—PTI*

### 4 peace committee members killed in KP

Heavily armed terrorists killed four members of a local peace committee in an ambush in northwest Pakistan on Sunday, police said. The incident occurred in Kulachi tehsil of Dera Ismail Khan District in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province. The terrorists also abducted a committee member. No group has claimed responsibility for the attack.

Security officials and bystanders remove damaged train coaches, in Quetta, Pakistan, on Sunday *–PTI*

US Secret Service Police examine evidence at the scene near the White House on Saturday *–PTI*

# Shooter opens fire near White House, killed

**WASHINGTON, 24 MAY**

A man who opened fire Saturday near a White House security checkpoint is dead after being shot by officers who returned fire, the US Secret Service said. It was the third incidence of gunfire in the vicinity of President Donald Trump in the past month. A bystander was also struck, although it was not clear whether that person was hit by the suspect's bullets or those fired by officers.

The suspect was identified as 21-year-old Nasire Best, said a law enforcement official who spoke on the condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to discuss the investigation.

According to District of Columbia court records, Best was arrested in July 2025 after he attempted to enter a different White House checkpoint without authorization, didn't heed officers' commands to stop, "claimed he was Jesus Christ" and said he wanted to be arrested.

It was the third time in the past month that shots were fired near the president after incidents at the White House Correspondents' Association Dinner in April and near the Washington Monument earlier in May.

Secret Service said none of its officers were injured, and that Trump — who was at the White House at the time — was not "impacted." *—PTI*

# 2nd Congo Ebola health centre set ablaze

**BUNIA, 23 MAY**

Angry residents of a town in eastern Congo attacked and burned a tent that was part of a health centre where people are being treated for Ebola, the staff there said on Saturday. It was the second such attack in the region in a week.

No one was hurt, according to initial reports, but as patients ran out to escape the fire, 18 people with suspected Ebola infections left the facility and are now unaccounted for, a local hospital director said.

The tent had been set up by the Doctors Without Borders humanitarian group, Dr. Richard Lokudi, director of a local hospital.

The bodies of those who died of Ebola can be highly contagious. The dangerous work of burying them is being managed wherever possible by authorities, which can be met by protests from families and friends.

Authorities in northeastern Congo on Friday banned funeral wakes and gatherings of more than 50 people in an effort to curb the spread of the virus.

The World Health Organisation has said that the outbreak now poses a "very high" risk for Congo. *—PTI*

## 1 dead, 21 missing as newly-built high-rise falls in Philippines

**ANGELES, 24 MAY**

A nine-storey building under construction collapsed before dawn Sunday in Angeles City in the Philippines, killing a Malaysian tourist and trapping at least 21 people, mostly workers, officials said, adding that there were signs of life for those trabbed in the rubble.

At least 24 workers escaped or were rescued after the structure crumbled in a crowded neighbourhood.

Another tourist was injured after debris struck a nearby lodging house.

Rescue teams, including police and firefighters, searched through concrete slabs and twisted metal overnight. Two more trapped workers were located alive at the time of publishing. *—PTI*

Rescue workers at the Liushenyu coal mine, in China's Shanxi Province *—PTI*

## RESCUERS RACE AGAINST TIME TO FIND CHINA MINE BLAST SURVIVORS

**QINYUAN, 24 MAY**

Rescuers in northern China continued searching for survivors after a coal mine explosion in Shanxi province killed at least 82 people, officials said Sunday. The death toll was revised down from 90. Two miners remain missing and dozens are hospitalised. Officials said the mine had "seriously" violated laws and state media reported inaccurate mine blueprints hampered rescue efforts. Authorities have detained those responsible. *—PTI*

## ICE arrests 26-year-old Indian national in LA

**LOS ANGELES, 24 MAY**

US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) in Los Angeles announced the arrest of Parminderpal Singh, 26, an Indian national, on Thursday. ICE said Singh's criminal record includes vehicle theft, grand theft, trespassing, and vandalism, and he remains in custody pending removal proceedings.

The agency posted on X, "ICE Los Angeles arrested Parminderpal Singh, 26, of India, on 21 May. Singh's criminal record includes vehicle theft, grand theft, trespassing, and vandalism." Earlier, in September 2025, Harjit Kaur, a 73-year-old Sikh woman who had lived in the US for three decades, shared her ordeal of being arrested and deported to India.

She described ICE's behaviour as "very bad" and said, "I was arrested on 8 September… I was then taken to Arizona, from where I was sent to Delhi," adding she was given chips and cookies for food. Kaur's case highlights ongoing immigration enforcement. *—ANI*

**2 KILLED, 69 INJURED**

# *Russia bombs Kyiv with Oreshnik missile*

**KYIV, 24 MAY**

Russia launched a massive air barrage on Kyiv on Sunday, deploying its powerful hypersonic Oreshnik ballistic missile for the third time since its invasion. At least two people were killed in the capital, and dozens of others missing and injured during the intense assault.

The Oreshnik, which is capable of carrying nuclear or conventional warheads, struck the city of Bila Tserkva in the Kyiv region, Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelenskyy stated.

Russia's Defence Ministry on Sunday confirmed it used the Oreshnik, as well as other missile types, to strike Ukrainian "military command and control facilities," air bases and military industrial enterprises.

50 locations across Kyiv were damaged in the massive bombardment *—UKRAINE EMERGENCY SERVICES*

Russia said the strikes were a retaliation for a Ukraine drone strike on a dormitory in Russian-occupied Luhanskthat killed at least 21 people, mostly women, a few days ago.

The response included 600 strike drones and 90 air, sea and ground-launched missiles, Ukraine's Air Force stated. Ukrainian air defences destroyed and jammed 549 drones and 55 missiles.

Yet, damage was recorded in 50 locations across several districts of the capital, including residential buildings, shopping centres and schools, Ukraine's Emergency Service stated. Police department buildings were also damaged, and at least 69 people injured.

Water-supply facility was also hit, and the Chernobyl Museum in Kyiv had been "effectively destroyed," Zelenskyy added. *—PTI*

# Ukraine protests bill that declares missing people dead

**KYIV, 24 MAY**

Hundreds of Ukrainians marched through capital Kyiv on Friday to demand that the government repeal a recent law that families of missing soldiers say could lead to their loved ones being prematurely declared dead.

Critics say the legislation, passed in February, allows courts to declare missing Ukrainian military personnel legally dead before their fate has been fully confirmed.

More than 90,000 people are listed as missing in Ukraine's unified registry of persons who disappeared under special circumstances, according to Artur Dobrosierdov, the country's commissioner for missing persons.

The Ukrainian register for missing people covers those who went missing during combat, as a result of armed aggression or in occupied territories, mostly after Russia's all-out invasion began on Feb. 24, 2022. But some cases date back to 2014, when Russian soldiers invaded the Crimean Peninsula and pro-Russia forces started fighting in eastern Ukraine.

The registry began operating in May 2023, and at that point, information about both military personnel and civilians from previous years was entered.

Similar demonstrations have been held before over the issue. *—Agencies*

## Anupam Rasayan to buy 43% stake in Bliss GVS Pharma

**NEW DELHI, 24 MAY**

Anupam Rasayan India, a speciality chemicals manufacturer, has signed an agreement to acquire up to 43.3 per cent stake in pharmaceutical company Bliss GVS Pharma Ltd for approximately Rs 1,369.51 crore. The company will also launch an open offer to acquire a further 26 per cent from public shareholders at the same price of Rs 299 per share. The Surat-based firm will fund the acquisition with a Rs 300 crore term loan and a non-controlling, non-voting equity instrument. Managing Director Anand Desai said the deal will strengthen the company's presence across the pharmaceutical value chain, from key starting materials to finished formulations. Bliss GVS Pharma, founded in 1984, makes suppositories, tablets, capsules, and injectables, and holds USFDA and WHO approvals. It aims to build an pharma manufacturing platform. The company reported a 40 per cent rise in net profit in FY 2025-26. *—PTI*

# FUEL AUSTERITY DIMS DEMAND OUTLOOK

### India cuts annual product growth forecast by 40%

**NEW DELHI, 24 MAY**

India's transportation fuel demand growth is expected to slow sharply in the second half of 2026 as government-led fuel conservation measures, elevated crude oil prices and a weakening rupee weigh on mobility and consumption trends, according to energy analysts.

Petrol and diesel prices have risen by about Rs 5 per litre in three hikes since 15 May, as OMCs passed on higher global oil prices. The increases came amid Prime Minister Narendra Modi's urging of fuel conservation, remote work, and reduced non-essential travel to ease pressure on forex reserves and the current account deficit.

A report by Elif Binici, Lead Analyst (Modeling) at Kpler, revised down India's 2026 refined products demand growth forecast by about 77,000 barrels per day (kbd), or 39 per cent, to around 78 kbd from an earlier estimate of 128 kbd, citing weaker expected growth in gasoline and diesel consumption. Petrol demand faces the steepest downside risk, with growth projected to undershoot the earlier growth estimate by 25 reduction of barrels per day (kbd). Petrol consumption is now estimated at 1010 kbd, down from 1035 kbpd amid weaker commuting activity, slower discretionary travel and government fuel-saving campaigns.

The report said India's macroeconomic backdrop had deteriorated since the escalation of the US-Iran conflict, with higher crude import costs, refinery expenses and rupee depreciation and state-run oil marketing companies (OMCs).

Retail petrol and diesel prices have been largely frozen since 2022, and even after recent increases, remain well below breakeven levels for state-run retailers. At a national average of Rs 103 per litre, petrol is still far short of the estimated breakeven of Rs 125, while diesel at Rs 94 compares with a breakeven of Rs 115-120. Before the start of the price revision cycle, state-run fuel retailers were losing roughly Rs 1,000 crore per day as elevated crude procurement costs and currency weakness continued to outpace retail prices. The rupee has weakened about 6 per cent since the conflict began and 10 per cent over the past year, while FX reserves have fallen roughly 4.3 per cent since late February as authorities moved to stabilise the currency and curb imported inflation. *—PTI*

**Retail fuel price hike 'inevitable' if global oil pressures persist**

-Subhankar Sen, Director (HR) of Bharat Petroleum

**REPORT FINDS**

## 'El Nino, Hormuz problems to fuel global food inflation'

**NEW DELHI, 24 MAY**

- Global food inflation risks are rising due to possible disruption in the Hormuz Strait and worsening El Nino conditions, a Citi report said agriculture markets are vulnerable to supply disruptions.

Global food inflation risks are rising due to possible disruption in the Hormuz Strait and worsening El Nino conditions, according to a Citi Research report, which warned that agricultural commodity prices could face strong upward pressure in the next 6 to 12 months.

The report said agriculture markets are vulnerable to supply disruptions caused by higher energy costs, fertiliser shortages and adverse weather conditions linked to El Nino.

The report said that a prolonged disruption of shipping in the Strait of Hormuz could increase the cost of agricultural production globally, as energy and fertiliser prices may rise.

"A prolonged SoH closure would drive up the cost of agriculture production (via higher energy prices), reduce crop yields/output (due to lower fertiliser and oil based fungicides and pesticide availability)," the report added. *—ANI*

-PTI

## Kerala liquor agency gets NCLAT nod

**NEW DELHI, 24 MAY**

The National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT) has dismissed appeals challenging the Competition Commission of India's (CCI) order to close a complaint against Kerala's liquor procurement agency, citing insufficient evidence.

A two-member bench rejected appeals from the Confederation of Indian Alcoholic Beverage Companies (CIABC) and the Association of Distillers, Brewers and Vintners of India (ADBVI), alleging abuse of dominant position by Kerala State Beverages (Manufacturing and Marketing) Corporation (KSBC).

The CCI, on 21 October, 2021, declined to probe allegations against KSBC Ltd and Travancore Sugar and Chemicals Ltd (TSCL).

The appellants claimed KSBC's control over wholesale liquor procurement in Kerala led to unfair pricing, arbitrary tender conditions, delayed payments, and preferential treatment for state brands.

However, NCLAT observed the appellants failed to provide concrete evidence of anti-competitive conduct.

The tribunal also upheld the CCI's view that Clause 11(c) of the rate contract does not constitute abuse and dismissed claims of discrimination against the national appelate tribul's 'Jawan' rum brand, noting its minimal benefit and limited market distortion.

The National Company Law Appellate Tribunal ,in its order, noted down CCI's observations that KSBC provides cash discounts to manufacturers ranging from approximately 7 per cent to 22 per cent, with lower discounts being given more favourably towards manufacturers. *—PTI*

## Bernstein says Adani is stronger; sees $195B biopharma market

**NEW DELHI, 24 MAY**

Brokerage firm Bernstein said concerns surrounding the Adani Group following the 2023 short-seller episode and subsequent US regulatory developments now appear largely behind the group, potentially paving the way for a revival in foreign funding.

In a report covering four listed Adani companies, Bernstein said many global funds had stayed away pending clarity, leaving several stocks under-owned despite strong operational execution.

The report said the settlement of the US SEC case and moves by US prosecutors to drop charges had removed a major overhang. "The group has gone through two big events in the last 4 years... With the latest news from the US, both seem to be behind," it said. What was never debated is their execution prowess and importance to building infrastructure in India.

The brokerage highlighted that Adani-controlled assets now account for around 50 per cent of India's container port market. While net group debt increased by roughly Rs 1 trillion since September 2024 due to aggressive capital expenditure, earnings growth remained strong, with group EBITDA rising at a CAGR of 22 per cent between FY23 and FY26.

- The brokerage highlighted that Adani-controlled assets now account for around 50 per cent of India's container port market. While net group debt increased by Rs 1 trillion since September.

**BIOPHARMA SAW GROWING 4X IN A DECADE**

Separately, Bernstein initiated coverage on the India Healthcare sector, projecting the biopharma industry to grow 4 times to USD 195 billion over the next decade.

The brokerage sees six innovation "rainmakers" adding USD 70 to USD 75 billion to industry size.

Zydus Lifesciences is its top pick with an Outperform rating, alongside Lupin and Sun Pharma.

The report noted that Indian Biopharma quality is on a transformation path and will anchor exports of these innovation medicines. *—PTI*

**IN FY26**

## LIC emerges as most profit-making financial firm in Q4

**NEW DELHI, 24 MAY**

State-owned Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC) has emerged as the highest profit-making firm in the Indian financial sector in the March quarter, netting a little over Rs 23,400 crore. Even among Central Public Sector Enterprises, the Corporation maintained the top position for fourth-quarter profit for FY26.

LIC reported a 23 per cent jump in net profit to Rs 23,420 crore in the March quarter, up from Rs 19,013 crore a year ago.

It was followed by State Bank of India (SBI) and HDFC Bank, which posted profits of Rs 19,684 crore and Rs 19,221 crore, respectively in the quarter.

However, SBI significantly outpaced LIC in annual profit, earning Rs 80,032 crore in FY26 compared to LIC's Rs 57,419 crore.

Among other PSUs, Indian Oil Corporation (IOC) closed the fourth quarter with a net profit of Rs 11,378 crore, followed by Coal India at Rs 10,839 crore, Power Finance Corporation (PFC) earned Rs 8,598 crore and NTPC Rs 8,747 crore as profit, as per the data available on stock exchanges.

LIC's Assets Under Management (AUM) increased to Rs 57,29,396 crore as of March 31, 2026, from Rs 54,52,297 crore on March 31, 2025, registering an increase of 5 per cent year-on-year.

Among the sector, Vodafone Idea became the highest quarterly profit earner in the January-March quarter with a record bottom line of Rs 51,970 crore, its first ever in about six years, mainly due to relief in statutory liabilities. *—PTI*

## Overseas travel spending by Indians drops to $1.09B in March

**MUMBAI, 24 MAY**

Overseas travel spending by Indians declined by USD 212.43 million to USD 1.09 billion in March compared to February, according to RBI data. The outward remittances for travel were at USD 1.3 billion in February.

The RBI data on 'Outward Remittances under the Liberalised Remittance Scheme (LRS)' shows overseas spending under different categories. Against the backdrop of the West Asia conflict pushing oil prices higher and pulling down the rupee, Prime Minister Modi has urged people to reduce foreign travel to help curb rupee depreciation.

Total outward remittances stood at USD 2.59 billion in March 2026, of which travel accounted for the largest share at USD 1.09 billion. Indians spent USD 623.05 million under the 'other travel' category, which includes holiday trips and credit card settlements. Spending on education-related travel totalled USD 450.16 million.

The data also showed that outbound remittances towards maintenance of close relatives stood at USD 389.78 million in March. Further, Indians invested USD 440.22 million in equity and debt instruments, higher than February. Spending on the purchase of immovable property overseas stood at USD 38.68 million, down from USD 51.36 million in February. *—PTI*

## 6 top Mcap firms surge by ₹ 74,111 cr; led by Reliance

**NEW DELHI, 24 MAY**

Combined valuation of six of the top-10 firms surged by Rs 74,111.57 crore last week, with Reliance Ind leading.

"Markets ended the week with marginal gains amid high volatility, as benchmark indices saw sharp intraday swings driven by rupee weakness, mixed global cues, and uncertainty over inflation and interest rates," said Ajit Mishra of Religare Broking Ltd.

Of the top-10 pack, Reliance Industries, ICICI Bank, TCS, Bajaj Finance, L&T and LIC were the gainers, while HDFC Bank, Bharti Airtel, SBI and HUL lost valuation.

Reliance added Rs 24,696.89 crore, to Rs 18,33,117.70 crore.

TCS's jumped Rs 19,339 crore to Rs 8.38 lakh crore, and Bank surged Rs 14,516 crore to Rs 9.07 lakh crore. *—PTI*

## RBI DIVIDEND MAY EASE SUBSIDY BURDEN: EXPERTS

**NEW DELHI, 23 MAY**

The consumer affairs ministry has amended legal metrology rules to allow government-approved testing centres to verify hydrogen, LPG, LNG and CNG fuel dispensers, expanding the country's measurement oversight framework as cleaner fuel adoption grows.

The Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution amended the Legal Metrology (Government Approved Test Centre) Rules, 2013, bringing the total number of instrument categories verifiable through Government Approved Test Centres (GATCs) to 23 from 18.

Verification fees for petrol and diesel dispensers have been set at Rs 5,000 per nozzle, while CNG, LPG, LNG and hydrogen dispensers will attract a fee of Rs 10,000 per nozzle.

GATCs are approved private facilities with the expertise to carry out verification and re-verification of specified weights and measures under the Legal Metrology Act. The framework allows qualified private laboratories to expand national verification capacity beyond state government resources.

State governments will be empowered to notify additional categories of instruments for GATC verification based on local requirements. *—ANI*

## IRFC to raise $2B ECB loan for large infra projects

**NEW DELHI, 24 MAY**

State-owned Indian Railway Finance Corporation plans to raise USD 2 billion via external commercial borrowing, mainly in Japanese yen, as part of its Rs 70,000 crore fund-raising plan for F626.

"We have just signed a loan agreement for raising an ECB loan of JPY equivalent USD 1.1 billion. Expected within the June quarter," IRFC Chairman Manoj Kumar Dubey told PTI. The 5-year loan is benchmarked to Overnight TONAR. Proceeds will finance projects linked with the railway sector.

This is Indian Railway first ECB in FY27. The Navratna PSU targets Rs 1 lakh crore in loan sanctions and Rs 40,000 crore in disbursements this year. In FY26, it sanctioned Rs 72,949 crore in projects and posted a record Rs 7,009 crore profit while maintaining zero NPAs. *—PTI*

**RISE OF DATE CENTRES**

## *AI demand boosts nuclear energy revival*

**NEW DELHI, 24 MAY**

The rapid increase in electricity demand from artificial intelligence (AI) data centres is driving a global boost in nuclear energy, according to Deven Choksey Research. The report notes that AI-driven power use, combined with energy security concerns and decarbonisation goals, is prompting nations to consider nuclear as a reliable long-term energy source.

It states that AI data centres are expected to exponentially raise energy demand to 1600 terawatt-hours by 2034. Currently, global electricity demand is rising at 3.3 to 3.7 per cent annually, driven by AI computing, EV adoption, and industrial electrification. The report highlights that the rising needs of AI infrastructure expose limitations of intermittent renewable sources like solar and wind.

It explains that AI data centres require power that is firm, dispatchable, always on, and carbon-free, which wind and solar energy cannot provide without costly storage. It emphasises that nuclear plants operate at nearly 92 per cent capacity factor, much higher than renewables, making them suitable for uninterrupted supply.

In 2025, global nuclear power generation reached a record high, driven by energy security and clean energy targets, with over 12 gigawatts of new capacity under construction. Nearly 40 countries aim to triple nuclear capacity by 2050, as governments see nuclear as vital for energy security and net-zero goals.

The EU has declared nuclear energy essential to its energy security. India is also set to expand its nuclear capacity significantly in the coming decades. *—ANI*

## Govt expands fuel dispenser verification to cover hydrogen, clean fuels

**NEW DELHI, 24 MAY**

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- AThe consumer affairs ministry has amended legal metrology rules to allow government-approved testing centres to verify hydrogen, LPG, LNG and CNG fuel dispensers

-PTI

## Former Karnataka pacer Akshay dies at 39

**BENGALURU, 24 MAY**

Former Karnataka fast bowler SL Akshay passed away here on Sunday due to a heart attack. He was 39.Akshay was playing a KSCA Division III match for Sapphire CC at SLS Kreedangana here on Sunday, when he left the field after bowling four overs. He was taken to a nearby hospital, where he was pronounced dead, officials stated.An athletic, effort bowler, Akshay played six First-Class matches for Karnataka. He also earned three List 'A' and nine T20 caps, in an era when Karnataka boasted of a loaded speedster trio in Vinay Kumar, A. Mithun and S. Arvind.The Shimoga-born Akshay made his senior Karnataka debut in 2010, in a Vijay Hazare Trophy List 'A' fixture against Hyderabad at Chennai.—*PTI*

-PTI

## Rohit Rajpal to be India's chef de mission at CWG

**NEW DELHI, 24 MAY**

India's Davis Cup captain Rohit Rajpal has been appointed as the country's Chef de Mission for the upcoming Commonwealth Games in Glasgow, according to IOA sources. Ravi Bengani is the Deputy Chef de Mission, while Vandana Rao and Rahul Swami will travel with the Indian contingent as general team managers for the Games, scheduled to be held from 23 July to 2 August. Indian Olympic Association (IOA) president P T Usha will be part of the senior leadership delegation alongside CEO Raghuram Iyer and Vignesh Vengalil Ujjwal.—*PTI*

## China's Li Shifeng defends Malaysia Masters title

**KUALA LUMPUR, 24 MAY**

China's Li Shifeng defended his Malaysia Masters men's singles crown with a one-sided 21-16, 21-17 victory over Thailand's Panitchaphon Teeraratsakul in Kuala Lumpur on Sunday. The 26-year-old becomes the second men's singles shuttler to win back-to-back titles after Malaysian great Lee Chong Wei, who won four in a row (2009-2012). World number seven Li dominated Sunday's match from the start, using his offensive tactics to unsettle his 21-year-old opponent. His powerful smashes yielded plenty of points in the opening stages, and he took an 11-6 lead at the first game interval. Teeraratsakul improved after that, but the Thai shuttler still struggled to contend with Li's smashing and intricate net-play.The second game played out like the first, and despite Teeraratsakul's strong work ethic, Li stood firm to defend his title in 50 minutes, celebrating with his trademark side flip.—*PTI*

## Pranati Nayak wins silver medal in FIG World Cup

**NEW DELHI, 24 MAY**

India's Pranati Nayak clinched a silver medal in the women's vault event at the FIG World Challenge Cup 2026 in Tashkent. The 31-year-old Odisha gymnast, a three-time Asian Championship medallist, secured an average score of 13.025 after registering 12.950 and 12.700 across her two vaults in the final on Saturday. Vietnam's Thi Quynh Nhu Nguyen won the gold medal with a score of 13.375, while Uzbekistan's Shakhinabonu Yusufova claimed bronze with 12.950.—*PTI*

# Rajasthan beat MI by 30 runs to enter playoffs

## PBKS and KKR are knocked out of the tournament

**MUMBAI, 24 MAY**

Rajasthan Royals rode on Jofra Archer's all-round brilliance to book the fourth and final play-off berth with a 30-run victory over Mumbai Indians in the Indian Premier League here on Sunday.

Archer returned with splendid figures of 4-0-17-3 after his 15-ball 32 helped Royals reach a fighting 205 for 8 after 20 overs.

Rajasthan Royals became the fourth and final team to qualify for the IPL 2026 Playoffs after defeating the Mumbai Indians by 30 runs on Sunday. Punjab Kings and Kolkata Knight Riders were knocked out of the tournament.

It was 73 runs in the last five overs bowled by the Mumbai Indians, which proved to be decisive as the Mumbai Indians could manage only 175 for 9 in 20 overs.

The victory lifted Rajasthan Royals to the fourth position in the IPL points table with 16 points, effectively knocking out Punjab Kings, Kolkata Knight Riders, and even Delhi Capitals the latter two had slim outside chances.

Rajasthan Royals rode on Jofra Archer's all-round brilliance to book the fourth and final play-off berth –PTI

Mumbai Indians' reply was spruced with a timely half-century from Suryakumar Yadav 60 off 42 balls with four sixes and three fours as well as skipper Hardik Pandya's 15-ball 34 and Will Jacks' 33 off 18 balls. But none of these efforts was enough to revive the five-time winners, who had slipped to 38 for four with Archer's two-wicket burst at the start. The collapse began when Archer produced a jaffa a perfect outswinger which darted sharply away from Rohit Sharma (0), who went on a fishing expedition away from his body.

Rajasthan Royals: 205/8 in 20 overs (Dhruv Jurel 38, Jofra Archer 32; Deepak Chahar 2/43) beat Mumbai Indians: 175/9 in 20 overs (Suryakumar Yadav 60, Hardik Pandya 34; Jofra Archer 3/17, Brijesh Sharma 2/26 ) by 30 runs. —*PTI*

## Tom Moody hints at leadership change at LSG

Lucknow Super Giants are set to consider a leadership overhaul after enduring two dismal IPL campaigns, with Director of Cricket Tom Moody admitting skipper Rishabh Pant has struggled to handle the pressures of captaincy. After finishing seventh in 2025, LSG are set to end the 2026 season in either ninth or 10th place, depending on the Mumbai Indians' final result. Under Pant's captaincy, the franchise managed only 10 wins in 28 matches across two seasons. "From a captaincy point of view, you know, he's found it challenging, obviously, and the results reflect that," Moody said to reporters after the seven-wicket loss to Punjab Kings on Saturday. "And you do have to wonder whether that is a pressure that is reflected in his performance with the bat. I know that this season has been a difficult season for us, but we will reflect on it, we'll take time, we'll reflect on it. We'll consider all things."

Pant, already under intense scrutiny after being brought for a record-breaking Rs 27 crore, has also struggled to make a significant impact with the bat. Widely regarded as one of India's most destructive batters, the wicketkeeper-opener enjoyed stellar seasons in 2018 when he scored 684 runs

CANADIAN GRAND PRIX

Mercedes driver George Russell, of Britain, waves after winning the sprint race –X/@ CANADIANGRANDPRIX

# Russell clashes with teammate Kimi in sprint win

**MONTREAL, 24 MAY**

George Russell clashed early with Mercedes teammate Kimi Antonelli in the Canadian Grand Prix sprint race, sending the teen star into the grass in an entertaining victory from the pole.

Russell — who later took the pole for his Grand Prix title defence Sunday at Circuit Gilles Villeneuve — fended off a pair of attacks from Antonelli on the sixth of 23 laps as the drivers made contact in Turn 1, forcing the 19-year-old Italian into the grass.

"That was very naughty," a furious Antonelli said in one of several complaints as emotions boiled over on the team radio.

Antonelli, the winner of the last three Grand Prix races, accused Russell of pushing him off before demanding a penalty.

Mercedes team principal Toto Wolff told Antonelli to "concentrate on the driving, please, not on the radio moaning."

"I need to recheck. Emotions were very high in the moment, and obviously, I was very annoyed," Antonelli said in an ensuing press conference, moments after a frosty finish-line handshake with Russell.

"We just need a bit of clarity, and then once it's clear, it's all going to be fine. The main thing for the team is that there's no contact, that we don't pressure each other, which today at the end was very close."

From Russell's point of view, he'd done nothing wrong, chalking up the fireworks simply to hard racing.

"I wasn't investigated, so I guess the race directors and stewards thought the same," said the 28-year-old English driver, sitting next to Antonelli. "As kids in karting, we know that overtaking on the outside, there's a certain element of risk that comes with that. They're amazing overtakes when they come off, but the chances are quite slim.

"There was only one direction I was going, and I was going to close the line because that's my right to do so. Respect to him for giving it a go. Emotions are always high for all of us in the cockpit, but I'm sure we'll both talk about it after." —*PTI*

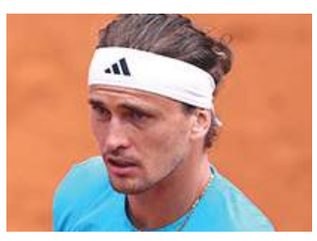
# Zverev leaps first hurdle in Roland-Garros

**ROME, 24 MAY**

The No.2 seed Alexander Zverev drew on his vast Grand Slam experience to navigate past Frenchman Benjamin Bonzi in the first round of Roland-Garros 2026 on Sunday.

The 2024 runner-up stormed through 6-3, 6-4, 6-2 on Court Philippe-Chatrier to clear the opening stage for the 10th time in 11 trips to Paris.

Chasing an elusive first Grand Slam title, Zverev advances to a meeting with Tomas Machac, whom he defeated on these grounds at the Paris 2024 Olympic Games.



### Marta dedicates opening round win to Ukraine

Marta Kostyuk dedicated her first-round win on Sunday at the French Open 2026 to her home country of Ukraine, saying her parents' house was nearly hit by a missile earlier in the day.

The Kyiv native beat Oksana Selekhmeteva, who was born in Russia but obtained Spanish nationality four days ago, 6-2, 6-3, to get her campaign in Paris off to a strong start.

"I'm incredibly proud of myself today, I think it was one of the most difficult matches of my life," 15th seed Kostyuk said on court.

"This morning, 100 metres from my parents' house, a missile fell. I'm obviously very happy to be in the second round. All my thoughts and all my heart were with the people of Ukraine today. My biggest example is the Ukrainian people today," she added. —*PTI*

NORWAY CHESS

# Gukesh, Praggnanandhaa lead India's charge

**OSLO, 24 MAY**

World champion D Gukesh will have a shot at rediscovering his touch ahead of his world championship title defence when he launches his campaign at the prestigious Norway Chess on Monday, facing another stern test of temperament and skill against an elite field.

The elite field is headlined by former world No. 1 Magnus Carlsen and, besides Gukesh, also features Indian star R Praggnanandhaa, with a formidable Indian contingent aiming to end the country's long-standing wait for a maiden title in the picturesque surroundings of Oslo and its scenic fjords.

The carefully chosen venue, the iconic Deichman Bjørvika public library overlooking the Oslofjord waterfront and located just a couple of kilometres from the Nobel Peace Centre, will host six of the world's best players in both the Open and Women's sections.

India, now firmly established as a global chess powerhouse, will have four representatives in the event -- Gukesh and Praggnanandhaa in the Open category, alongside Koneru Humpy and World Cup winner Divya Deshmukh in the women's field. —*PTI*

## NRAI names 22-member squad for Munich WC

**NEW DELHI, 24 MAY**

India will field a 22-member squad at the ISSF Rifle/Pistol 24 to 31 World Cup in Munich from May, with double Olympic medallist Manu Bhaker set to compete in two individual pistol events besides the mixed team competition.

The National Rifle Association of India (NRAI) on Sunday announced a squad blending experienced campaigners with young shooters for what is regarded as one of the sport's premier annual events.

Alongside Manu, Olympian and world championship medallist Esha Singh will also feature in two individual pistol events as India's leading shooters return to top-level international competition away from home for the first time this season.

The competition will begin on May 26 with the women's 25m pistol precision stage. —*PTI*

# Gulveer Singh wins silver, breaks national 5,000m record

**NEW DELHI, 24 MAY**

Gulveer Singh, added another feather to his cap with a silver medal in men's 5000m at the Sound Running Track Fest in Los Angeles on Sunday.

On his way to the runner-up spot, he broke his own national record set in Japan two years ago, improving by eight seconds from 13:11.82 to 13:03.93 in the United States of America. Last year, Gulveer became the first Indian to break the 13-minute barrier in the men's 5000m during an indoor race at the BU Terrier DMR Challenge in Boston, as he clocked 12:59.77, which is still his Personal Best.

Gulveer is currently based in Colorado Springs, USA, and is the first Indian distance runner to hold multiple national records across events ranging from the 3,000m on the track to the 25km road race.

The silver at Los Angeles marked Gulveer's fourth competitive outing this season.

He claimed third place in the 5,000m short track event at the Sound Running Invite in Winston-Salem, USA, in February and became the first Indian to clock a sub-60-minute half-marathon the next month, finishing an impressive third at the NYC Half Marathon 2026 in New York. —*PTI*

Gulveer Singh, added another feather to his cap with a silver medal in men's 5000m –PTI

WORLD CUP TRAINING 2026

# *Iran moves WC base camp from US to Mexico*

**PHOENIX, 24 MAY**

The president of the governing body of Iranian soccer said Saturday the nation's World Cup training base has been moved from the United States to Mexico after receiving approval from FIFA.

Mehdi Taj, president of the Iran Football Federation, announced the decision Saturday in a statement issued by the federation's media relations official. FIFA has not confirmed the move.

Iran had been scheduled to train in Tucson, Arizona, but a move has been a possibility because of uncertainty surrounding the war in the Middle East and security concerns. Officials at Tucson's Kino Sports Complex had no comment.

The federation says the team will now be based in Tijuana, Mexico, just south of San Diego. This year's World Cup runs from June 11 to July 19 and will be co-hosted by the U.S., Canada and Mexico.

"FIFA must approve all team-based camps for the countries participating in the World Cup," Taj said in his statement. "Fortunately, following the requests we submitted and the meetings we held with FIFA and World Cup officials in Istanbul, as well as the webinar meeting we had yesterday in Tehran with the respected FIFA secretary general, our request to change the team's base from the United States to Mexico was approved."

Iran plays Group G games in Inglewood, California, against New Zealand on June 15 and Belgium six days later, then faces Egypt on June 26 in Seattle. The federation said Tijuana's relatively proximity to Inglewood, a suburb of Los Angeles, will benefit the team and the new location "includes all training facilities, gym, private restaurant and everything else the team needs." —*PTI*

## HARRY KANE'S HAT-TRICK POWERS BAYERN TO WIN OVER STUTTGART

**BERLIN, 24 MAY**

Harry Kane cut through the smoke of the German Cup final with a hat trick for Bayern Munich to beat defending champion Stuttgart 3-0 and complete another domestic double.

Kane's goals in the second half set off fireworks among the Bayern fans who had joined their Stuttgart rivals in protesting against the German soccer federation (DFB) for a planned increase in security measures.



The protests started after the halftime break when the Bayern fans displayed a giant DFB logo with a line drawn through it over a banner with an expletive against the DFB, while their Stuttgart counterparts had a banner calling for "freedom for the terraces." They both then filled the ends of the stadium with huge pyrotechnic displays, shrouding the field under a cover of smoke.

Kane broke the deadlock shortly afterwards with a diving header to Michael Olise's cross in the 55th minute.

That prompted more fireworks from the Bayern fans, worsening the already poor visibility and leading to a break in play.—*PTI*

## NATIONAL DIVYANG T20 MEET: UP BEAT MUMBAI TO WIN TITLE

**BENGALURU, 24 MAY**

Uttar Pradesh beat defending champions Mumbai by 4 wickets in an exciting final to win the 5th National Divyang T20 Cricket tournament here on Sunday.

The prestigious championship was organised under the aegis of the Karnataka State Divyang Cricket Association (KSDCA), which is the state body of the Physically Challenged Cricket Council of India (PCCAI). PCCAI is also a founder member of DCCI.

In the final played at the Sports Garden, Mumbai posted a competitive total of 171/7 in 20 overs.

Ravindra Sante was unbeaten on 71 while Vikrant Keni contributed 54 runs.

For Uttar Pradesh, Mohammed Sadik delivered an impressive bowling performance, taking 2/24. —*PTI*